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THE WORKS

OF

ALPHONSE DAUDET

LIMITED EDITION

XII.

KINGS IN EXILE

SCENES AND FANCIES

VOL. II.

Of the LIMITED EDITION of Alphonse Daudet one thousand copies have been printed for America.

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THE WORKS OF

ALPHONSE DAUDET

KINGS IN EXILE

TO WHICH IS ADDED

SCENES AND FANCIES

TRANSLATED BY

KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

ILLUSTRATED BY

P. G. JEANNIOT AND PAUL AVRIL

BOSTON

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

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XI.

THE WATCHERS.

It was the end of an amicable meal in the parlour of the second-hand establishment in the Rue Éginhard. Old Leemans when he is alone munches his crust at the kitchen table, opposite to the Darnet, without cloth or napkin; but when he has company the careful housekeeper takes off, grumbling, the white covers to the furniture, hides away the little mats before the chairs, and sets the table before the portrait of "monsieur," in the neat and peaceful salon, worthy of a priest, which is for several hours delivered over to smells of fry and garlic, and to discussions, highly seasoned also, in the argot of low money-dealing.

Ever since the "Grand Stroke" had been preparing, these dinners were frequent. It is well for all such affairs with mixed accounts to meet often and concert together; and nowhere could this be done so safely as in the depths of the little Rue Eginhard, lost in the past of ancient Paris. There, at any rate, they could talk aloud, discuss, and plot... And now the end was near. In a few days, what am I saying? in a few hours the renun-

ciation would be signed and the "affair" which had already swallowed up so much money would begin to be profitable. The certainty of success illumined the eyes and voices of the guests with a sort of gilded gayety, made the table linen whiter, the wine better. It was a true wedding-feast, presided over by old Leemans and Pichery, his inseparable, — a wooden head, stiff and pomatumed Hungarian fashion, above a stiff stock; something military but not frank, the aspect of a cashiered officer. Present profession: usurer in pictures, a new and complicated trade well versed in our present art manias and adapted to them. When the son of a family is high and dry, shorn and raked, he goes to Pichery, picture-dealer, sumptuously installed in the Rue Lafitte.

"Have you a Corot, a treasure of a Corot? . . I am so in love with that painter."

"Ah! Corot! . ." says Pichery, closing his dead fish-eyes with beatific admiration; then, changing his tone: "Yes, I have just what you want . . ." and then, on a great easel, rolled in front of them, he shows a pretty Corot, a morning scene all quivering with silvery mists and nymphs dancing beneath the willows. The spendthrift dandy puts up his monocle and pretends to admire it.

"Chic! . . very chic! . . How much?"

"Fifty thousand francs," says Pichery without blinking. The other does not blink either.

"Three months? . ."

"Three months, with security."

The dandy gives his note and carries away the

picture to his own house or his mistress's, and for a whole day he allows himself the joy of saying at the club and on the boulevard: "I have just bought a stunning Corot." The next day he sends his Corot to the auction rooms where Pichery despatches old Leemans to buy it back for ten or twelve thousand francs, its proper price. This is usury at exorbitant interest, but legal, without risk. Pichery himself is not expected to know whether or not the amateur buys in good faith. He sells his Corot very dear, *cuir et poils*, as they say in that pretty business, but he is strictly within his rights, for the value of an art object is conventional. Moreover he is very careful not to sell any but authentic merchandise, passed upon by old Leemans, who, by the way, has taught him his artistic vocabulary, very surprising in the mouth of that shady veteran, who is intimate however with the young Gomme and the cocottes of the Opera quarter, both of whom are very necessary to his traffic.

On the other side of Patriarch Leemans, sat Séphora and her husband, playing lovers; their chairs and their glasses touching one another. They had met so seldom since the beginning of this affair! J. Tom Levis, who, for the world at large, was in London, was really living shut up in his castellated abode at Courbevoie, fishing with a line all day for want of dupes to bait, and much occupied in worrying the Sprichts with his tomfoolery. Séphora, more restrained than a Spanish queen, awaiting the king at any hour, and always cere-

monious and under arms, was forced to lead the life of an upper-class demi-mondaine; a life so empty and so little amusing that such ladies nearly always live in couples in order to endure their long, weary drives and heart-breaking leisure. But the Comtesse de Spalato had no double in all the town. She could not visit courtesans, nor the other *déclassées* of the questionable world; honest women would not receive her; and Christian II. would not have tolerated around her that whirl of idlers who fill the salons frequented by men only. Consequently, she was absolutely alone in her boudoirs with their painted ceilings, and their mirrors garlanded with cupids and roses, but reflecting nought except her indolent image, bored by the king's insipid incense, burned at her feet like those headache perfumes that smoke in a golden cup. Ah! she would give quickly enough that melancholy princely life for the little cellar salon in the Rue Royale, with her mountebank before her executing his jig of the Grand Stroke! Scarcely could she even write to him to keep him informed of what was going on.

Consequently, how happy she is to-night; how she snuggles to Tom, excites him, stirs him up. "Come, make me laugh." And Tom bestirs himself, but his liveliness is not quite frank, and it drops after each outburst into a troublesome thought which he does not utter, and about which I will give you a thousand guesses. . .

Tom Levis is jealous. He knows that there can be nothing as yet between Christian and Séphora;

that she is much too clever to give herself without proper security; but the psychologic moment is approaching; that paper once signed, the agreement must be kept; and i' faith, my friend Tom felt troubles, uneasinesses, that were very strange in a man devoid of all superstitions and childish notions. Little feverish, terrified, cold chills ran over him as he looked at his wife, who had never seemed to him so pretty as she did now in her toilet elegance and the title of countess, which seemed to polish her features, brighten her eyes, and raise her hair beneath a coronet with pearls upon its spikes. Evidently J. Tom Levis is not up to the level of his part; he has not the solid shoulders of his trade. A mere nothing would decide him to take back his wife and let everything go. But a sort of shame restrains him, the fear of ridicule; and then, such sums of money spent on the affair. The unfortunate fellow argued the matter with himself and was torn by these various scruples, which the countess would never have supposed him capable of feeling. He affected great gayety, gesticulating with the dagger in his heart, enlivening the company with a choice relation of his Agency tricks, and ended by so exhilarating old Leemans and the glacial Pichery himself that they pulled their choicest tricks from their bags and told their best hoaxes on amateurs.

They get to that point, don't they, — these partners, these cronies, their elbows on the table? Yes, they told all; the underside of auctions; their trap-doors and pitfalls; the coalition of big

dealers, rivals apparently; their dodges; their traffic with porters, that mysterious free-masonry which puts a real barrier of greasy collars and ragged coats between a rare object and the caprice of a purchaser, and forces the latter at last to a folly at some great price. It was a tournament of cynical tales, a joust to the cleverest, the most rascally sharper.

"Did I ever tell you *that* about my Egyptian lantern and Mora?" asked Père Leemans, sipping his coffee. Then he told for the hundredth time — as an old soldier tells of his favourite campaign — the tale of the lantern which a distressed Levantine had let him have for two thousand francs, and which he resold the same day to the president of the council for forty thousand, with a double commission, five hundred from the Levantine and five thousand from the duke. But what made the charm of the tale was the account given of the sly twists and turns, the shrewd art of exciting and leading on a rich and conceited customer. "Yes, no doubt, a fine thing, but dear, too dear. . . I advise you, Monsieur le duc, to let some one else commit that folly. . . I am pretty sure the Sismondos. . . Ah! yes, yes, a pretty bit of work . . . this framework of little bars . . . that embossed chain . . ." And the old fellow, stimulated by the laughter that shook the table, fingered a shabby little note-book worn at the edges that lay on the table-cloth, and from which his memory refreshed itself now and then as to a date, a figure, an address. All the famous amateurs were classed and

noted in that book, like the marriageable girls with large *dots* on the *grand livre* of M. de. Foy, with their peculiarities, their hobbies, their complexions brown or fair; those who must be bullied; those who only value an object if it costs very dear; the sceptical amateur; the artless amateur, to whom you can say when you sell him a fraud: "*You* know . . . don't let any one get *that* away from you." To old Leemans personally the note-book was worth a fortune.

"Look here, Tom," said Séphora, who wanted to make her husband shine, "suppose you tell them *that* about your arrival in Paris . . . you know, your first affair, Rue Soufflot."

Tom did not need to be urged; he poured himself out a little brandy to strengthen his voice, and related how, about a dozen years before, returning from London, cleaned out and shabby, with his last five francs in his pocket, he heard from an old comrade, whom he met in an English tavern near the station, that the Agencies were just then engaged in a big affair, the marriage of Mlle. Beaugars, daughter of a contractor, who had twelve millions of dot and had taken it into her head to marry a great seigneur, a real one. A magnificent commission was offered, and the hounds were numerous. Tom was not hindered by that. He went to a reading-room and turned over all the genealogical books of France, the Gotha and Bottin, and finally discovered an ancient, a very ancient family ramifying into all that were most celebrated, and living at that time in the Rue

Soufflot. The incongruity between the title and the name of the street informed him plainly of either a downfall or a vice. "On what floor does M. le Marquis de X live?" He sacrificed his last bit of silver and obtained from the concierge a few scraps of information... Great nobility indeed ... widower, son just leaving Saint-Cyr and a daughter of eighteen, very well brought-up... "Rent two thousand francs, including gas, water, and carpet," added the concierge, for whom that last detail increased the dignity of his lodger... "Exactly what I want," thought Tom; and he went up, rather dashed, it must be said, by the respectable air of the staircase, statue at the bottom, arm-chairs at each landing, the luxury of a modern house, not much in keeping with his threadbare coat, his boots that let in water, and his very delicate errand.

"Part way up," related the agent, "I had half a mind to go down again. Then, i' faith, I thought it plucky to risk the stroke. I said to myself: 'You have wits, and cheek, and your living to make ... honour to intellect! ..' And up I went, four steps at a time. They ushered me into a great salon, of which I soon made the inventory. Two or three fine antiquities, pompous relics, a portrait by Largillière, much poverty underneath, sofa rickety, chairs without horsehair, chimney as cold as its marble mantelpiece. Enter the master of the house; majestic old man, very chic, Samson in 'Mademoiselle de la Seiglière.' 'You have a son, Monsieur le marquis?' At the first words Samson rose, indignant; I uttered the sum ... twelve mil-

lions . . . that made him sit down again, and we talked. . . He began by owning that he had not a fortune equal to his name, twenty thousand francs a year at the most, and that he would not be sorry to regild his blazon. The son would have one hundred thousand francs for a portion. 'Oh! Monsieur le marquis, the name suffices. . .' Then we settled the amount of my commission, and I got away, in a great hurry, being wanted at my place of business. . . Place of business, indeed! when I did n't know where to sleep. . . But at the door the old gentleman stopped me, and said, in a kindly way: 'Look here, you seem to me a lively fellow. . . I have a mind to propose to you. . . You might marry my daughter also. . . She has n't a *dot.* For to tell you the truth, I exaggerated just now about the twenty thousand francs a year. There 's not the half. . . But I can dispose of the title of a Roman count for my son-in-law . . . and what is more, if he is in the army, my relationship to the minister of war will secure him advancement.' I took notes: 'Rely upon me, M. le marquis,' and I was going out . . . A hand was laid flat upon my shoulder. . . I turned round. Samson looked at me, and laughed, with such a droll air. . . 'And then, there 's myself,' he said. . . 'What, M. le marquis?' 'Yes, I 'm not too far gone, and if I found an opportunity . . .' He ended by admitting that he was rotten with debts, and not a penny to pay them. '*Pardieu,* my dear Monsieur Tom,' he said, 'if you could ferret out for me some good business-woman with serious savings,

old maid or widow, send her this way with her purse . . . I 'll make her a marquise.' When I left that house my education was complete. I understood the whole of what there was to do in Parisian society; the Levis Agency was morally founded. . . "

This tale was marvellous as narrated, or rather as acted by Tom Levis. He rose, sat down, imitated the majesty of the old noble quickly degenerating into the cynicism of bohemia, and his way of spreading his handkerchief between his knees when he wanted to cross his legs, and the three corrections as to the nothingness of his actual resources. One might have thought it a scene from the "Neveu de Rameau," but Rameau's nephew in the nineteenth century, without powder, without grace, without violin, and with something hard, ferocious, the fierceness of an English bulldog in the satirical intonation of the former suburban blackguard. The others laughed and were mightily amused, deducing from Tom's narrative reflections philosophical and cynical.

"Don't you see, my children," said old Leemans, "that if we second-hand brokers combined together we should be masters of the world? . . People traffic with everything in these days, and everything passes through our hands, leaving a bit of its skin behind it. . . When I think of all the business that has been done for the last forty years in this hole of the Rue Éginhard, all that I have sold, vamped-up, exchanged! I lacked nothing but a crown to sell; and here it is . . . in the bag."

He rose, glass in hand, his eyes brilliant and ferocious.

"À la Brocante, mes enfants!"[1]

At the lower end of the room la Darnet, on the watch behind her black peasant's-cap, heard all and learned much about the business, in which she hoped to establish herself at "monsieur's" death, and sell on her own account.

Suddenly the little bell at the entrance door rang violently in a strangled way, like an old catarrh. They all quivered. Who could be coming at such an hour?

"It must be Lebeau," said old Leemans. "None but he would . . ."

Loud shouts welcomed the valet, whom they had not seen for some time, and who now made his entrance, pale, haggard, his teeth clenched, utterly prostrate in manner and out of temper.

"Sit down, my old rascal," said Leemans, making room between himself and his daughter.

"The devil!" said the other, looking round upon their jovial faces, the table and the remains of the feast. "You seem to be amusing yourselves here. . ."

At that observation and the funereal tone in which it was made, they looked at one another, rather uneasy. . . *Parbleu!* yes, they were amusing themselves, they were gay. Why should they be sad?

[1] No English word for *brocante*, nor any term that gives an idea of it: brokerage in old things, from clothes to rare pictures, furniture, and bric-à-brac.

M. Lebeau seemed stupefied.

"What! . . You don't know? . . When did you see the king, countess?"

"Why, this morning . . . yesterday . . . every day."

"And he told you nothing of the terrible quarrel? . ."

In two words he related the scene with the queen, the burned deed, their whole affair burned up with it, apparently.

"Ah! the sneak!" cried Séphora. "I'm sold!"

Tom, very uneasy, looked his wife in the eye. Could she, by chance, have had a moment of imprudent weakness? . . But milady was in no humour to explain herself, being full of her rage and indignation against Christian, who, for more than a week had been floundering in a series of lies to explain to her how it was that the deed of renunciation was not yet signed. . . Oh! the coward, the base coward and liar! . . But why had not Lebeau warned them earlier?

"Ah! yes, why indeed?" said the valet, with his hideous smile. . . "I should have had fine trouble to do that. . . For the last ten days I've roamed the highways. . . Five hundred leagues without taking breath, without halting. . . Not even the chance to write a letter, watched as I was by a cursèd monk, a Franciscan Father who smells like a wild beast and twirls his knife like a bandit. . . He watched my every movement; never let me out of his sight one second, under pretence that he did not know enough French to make himself

understood... The truth is, they distrust me at Saint-Mandé, and they have taken advantage of my absence to get a great affair under way.

"What affair?" asked all their eyes.

"Something, I think, about an expedition to Dalmatia... It is that devil of a Gascon who has turned their heads... Oh! I said from the first we ought to get rid of that fellow..."

But in vain did they try to hide things from him; he, the valet, had scented preparations in the air for some time past; letters departing at all hours; mysterious consultations. One day, opening a water-colour album which that little fool of a Rosen had left about, he had seen designs for uniforms, costumes drawn by her: "Illyrian volunteers, dragoons of the Faith, blue shirts, cuirassiers of the true Right." Another day he had overheard the princess and Mme. de Silvis in a grave discussion concerning the shape and size of the cockades. From all of which, and from scraps of remarks gathered here and there, he suspected a great expedition; and the journey he had just made was probably concerning it. The little dark man, a sort of hunchback, whom they had gone to find among the mountains of Navarre, must be some great general charged with leading the army under the orders of the king.

"What! the king going too!.." cried old Leemans, casting a contemptuous look at his daughter.

A tumult of words followed the old man's exclamation.

"And our money?"

"And the notes?"

"'T is an infamy!"

"A theft!"

And as, in these days, politics, like Æsop's dish is served up everywhere, Pichery, who is an imperialist, apostrophized the Republic stiff in his horse-hair stock: —

"Never under the Empire would such a thing have been allowed! — to endanger the tranquillity of a neighbouring State! . ."

"It is very certain," said Tom, gravely, "that if it were known to our authorities they would never permit it. . . They ought to be warned, stirred up. . ."

"Yes, I have thought of that," replied Lebeau. "Unluckily, I don't know anything positive, precise. They would not listen to me. Besides, our people are very distrustful . . . all their precautions are taken to mislead suspicions. . . This very evening, the queen's birthday, there is a great fête at the hôtel de Rosen. . . What good would it do to tell the authorities that those dancers are conspiring and preparing for battles? . . And yet there certainly is something out of the common going on at that ball. . ."

Then for the first time it was noticed that the valet was in evening dress, thin shoes, white cravat; yes, he is in charge of the buffets, and he must get back as fast as he can to the Île Saint-Louis. Suddenly Séphora, who had been reflecting for a few moments, said: —

"Listen, Lebeau . . . if the king starts, you will

know it, will you not? . . They will tell you, if only to pack his trunks. . . Well, if I am warned only one hour in advance I swear to you the expedition shall not take place."

She said this in her tranquil voice with slow but firm decision. And while Tom Levis was asking himself by what means his wife could prevent the king from starting, and the other conspirators, much dejected, were calculating what the non-success of the grand stroke would cost them, Maître Lebeau, returning to the ball, hurries along on the tips of his pumps through a labyrinth of dark little streets, old roofs, old balconies, scutcheoned portals, through all that aristocratic quarter of the last century now turned into workshops and manufactories, which, shaken by day with the rolling of heavy carts and the swarming of a poor population, resumes at night its character of a strange dead city.

The fête was seen and heard afar, — a summer fête, a midnight fête, sending along the two banks of the river its scattered echoes and its lights in a ruddy mist of flame from the extremity of the Island, which looks, as it projects into the flowing water, like the high and rounded poop of some gigantic vessel riding at anchor. Come nearer; tall and brilliantly lighted windows can be distinguished; a thousand coloured fires in glass globes are fastened among the copses, to the single trees of the garden; and along the Quay d'Anjou, usually asleep at that hour, the lanterns of the waiting carriages are making holes in the darkness

with their motionless little lights. Since Herbert's marriage the hôtel Rosen had seen no fête like this; in fact, the present one was finer, more vast, more crowded, with all its doors and windows open to the splendour of a starlit night.

The ground-floor apartments formed one long gallery of salons, lofty as a cathedral, decorated with paintings, ancient gilding, Dutch or Venetian lustres lighting a strange decoration, hangings shimmering with gold reflections upon green or red, heavy shrines of massive silver, ivories, framed in a medley, old mirrors with blackened quicksilver, reliquaries, banners, treasures of Montenegro and Herzegovina, which Parisian taste had known how to group and to display, with nothing discordant, nothing too exotic about them. The orchestra, stationed in the gallery of an ancient oratory recalling that of Chenonceaux, was surrounded with oriflammes, which sheltered also the chairs of the king and queen. In contrast to all this past, to these rich reflections from antiquity which would put old Leemans beside himself, came the waltzes of the day, languorous or whirling; the waltzers with long embroidered trains, with fixed and brilliant eyes in a mist of fluffy hair, passing like a defiance of abounding youth; fair young visions, slender, floating, and brunette apparitions of a moist white pallor. From time to time, from this tangle of dancers moving in a circle, from this medley of silken stuffs which added to the music a sound of coquettish and mysterious rippling, couples would detach them-

selves and waltz through the tall glass door, receiving on their heads, inclined in opposite directions, the white reflections of the illuminated frontal where the queen's monogram was glittering, and continue through the garden paths the rhythm of their dance, with some hesitation and little pauses caused by the distance of the music, making the waltz at last a cadenced march, a tuneful promenade, skirting the balmy groups of roses and magnolias. In short, apart from the rarity and the curiosity of the decorations and the presence of a few types of foreign women with the tawny hair and the languid suppleness of their Slav nature, there was nothing here, at first sight, but one of those fashionable kermesses such as the Faubourg Saint-Germain (represented at the hôtel Rosen by its most ancient and imposing names) was in the habit of giving in its old gardens of the Rue de l'Université, where the dancers often passed from the waxed floors to the lawns, the black coats being suffered to redeem themselves with light-coloured trousers,—summer fêtes in the open air, freer and more exuberant than others.

From his bedroom on the second floor the old duke, crippled for the last week by an acute attack of sciatica, listened to the echoes of his ball, smothering beneath the bedclothes his moans of pain, and his barrack-room maledictions on the ironical cruelty of the disease which nailed him to his bed on such a day, making it impossible that he should himself join that band of noble youth which was destined to start on the morrow.

The decree had gone forth, the posts for the struggle chosen, and this ball was a farewell, a sort of defiance to war's mischances, and, at the same time, a protection against the suspicions of the French police. Though the duke could not accompany the volunteers, he consoled himself with the thought that his son Herbert would take part in the affair, and his money too, for their Majesties had kindly permitted him to assume all the costs of the expedition. On his bed, mingled with maps for the staff and strategic plans, lay bills for the outfit: such as cases of muskets, shoes, blankets, victuals; all of which he carefully verified, with a terrible bristling of his moustache — heroic grimace of the royalist striving to get the better of his parsimonious instincts. Now and then, he lacked a figure or a fact, and then he sent for Herbert, — a pretext to keep for a few moments near him, there under his curtains, the tall son who was to leave him on the morrow for the first time, whom he might never see again perhaps, and for whom he felt an infinite tenderness, ill-concealed by his stiff manner and majestic silences. But the prince when he came would not stay long, being in haste to do the honours of the house, and, above all, unwilling to lose a moment of the short hours he had still to spend with his dear Colette.

Standing with him in the first salon, she helped him to receive his father's guests; looking prettier and more dainty than ever in her narrow tunic of old lace, made of the alb of a Greek bishop, the dull white reflections of which set off her fragile

beauty, that wore an impress of almost solemn mystery on this last evening. It gave repose to her features, it darkened the blue of her eyes, the same blue as that pretty little cockade fluttering among her curls beneath a diamond aigrette. . . Hush! the cockade of an Illyrian volunteer, the model designed by herself and adopted by the expedition. . . Ah! for three months she had not been idle, the pretty little thing! Copying proclamations, carrying them secretly to the convent of the Franciscans, designing costumes, banners, foiling the police whom she always believed were at her heels; it was thus she played her part as a royalist great lady, inspired by her former studies at the Sacré-Cœur. One only detail was lacking to her programme of Vendean guerilla warfare; she could not go, she could not follow her Herbert. For now it was Herbert, Herbert only; by some blessing of nature, the other was no more thought of than the poor ouistiti so cruelly crushed and mangled on the pavement of the quay. This delight of sporting a man's costume and of putting her feet into stout little boots was denied to Colette for two reasons: one, her service near the queen; the other, very private, whispered only the night before into Herbert's ear. Yes, if she were not mistaken, after a lapse of time easy to calculate by taking the day of the session of the Academy as the point of departure, the race of Rosen would be blessed with one representative the more; and it was quite impossible to expose a hope so dear, so precious, to the fatigues of an expedition which could not

terminate without some rough and bloody thrusts; quite as impossible as it was to accept an invitation for a waltz in those splendid salons. What secrets the little woman was now obliged to keep; and in spite of her mysterious lips, her eyes, adorably telltale, and the languid way in which she hung on Herbert's arm had a fancy to tell all.

Suddenly the music was hushed, the dancers stopped; every one stood up to await the entrance of Christian and Frederica. They crossed the three salons resplendent in national treasures, where the queen could see her monogram embroidered everywhere in flowers, lights, and jewels; where all things spoke to them of their country, of its glories; and now they stood upon the threshold of the garden. . . Never was monarchy represented in a loftier and more brilliant fashion; a perfect couple to engrave upon the coins of a people, on the frontal of a dynasty. The queen, especially, was admirable; younger by ten years in a splendid white attire, and on her neck, for all jewels, a heavy amber collar from which hung a cross. Given and blessed by the Pope, this collar has its legend, which the faithful relate to one another in whispers. Frederica wore it during the whole period of the siege of Ragusa, where it was twice lost in the sorties, and twice miraculously recovered under fire of the battle. She attaches a sort of superstition to it, fastens a queen's vow upon it, without one thought of the charming effect of its gold pearls close beside the golden hair of which they seem, as it were, to scatter the reflections.

While the sovereigns stood there, radiant, admiring the fête and the garden and its fairy illumination, suddenly three strokes of a bow, fantastic, rasping, energetic, were given from the middle of a clump of rhododendrons. Every Slav in the assembly quivered, recognizing the notes of *guzlas*, whose long-stemmed mandolins could be seen amid the dark-green foliage. The notes began with a humming prelude, an overflowing of distant and sonorous waves, advancing, rising, increasing, shedding themselves around. 'Twas like a heavy cloud, charged with electricity, from which, now and again, a sharper bow struck lightnings, whence there presently gushed forth, stormy and voluptuous, the heroic rhythm of the national air, hymn and dance in one, that air of Rodoïtza which "down there" takes part in all the fêtes and all the battles, presenting finely the double character of its antique legend: — The soldier Rodoïtza, fallen into the hands of the Turks, pretends death to escape them. They light a fire on his breast; the soldier does not flinch. They slip a snake, roused by the sun, into his bosom; they drive a score of nails beneath his nails: he maintains his stony stillness. Then, they bring to him Haïkouna, the tallest and loveliest of the daughters of Zara, who dances as she sings to him the air of Illyria. At the first notes, as Rodoïtza heard the tinkle of the sequins of her necklet, the quiver of the fringes of her belt, he smiled, his eyes opened and he would have been lost, if the dancer in a whirling step had not flung upon his face the silken scarf with which she timed

and crowned her dance. Thus was the soldier saved, and this is why for two hundred years the national air of Illyria is called the "air of Rodoïtza."

Hearing it ring now beneath the sky of exile, all the Illyrians, men and women, turned pale. This call of the *guslas*, which the orchestra at the farther end of the salon accompanies in undertones, like a murmur of waves above which rises the cry of the stormy petrel, *this* is the cry of the nation itself, swollen with memories, with tears, regrets, and hopes inexpressible. The huge bows, heavy, shaped like the bows of archers, did not vibrate upon common strings, but on nerves strained to the breaking point, on fibres delicately resonant. These young men, bold and proud, of martial cut, felt within them, all, the indomitable courage of Rodoïtza, so well repaid by woman's love; and these beautiful Dalmatians, tall as Haïkouna, have in their hearts her tenderness for heroes. And the old men, thinking of their distant country, the mothers looking at their sons, crave all to sob, all, all — were it not for the presence of the king and queen — uniting their voices to the strident cry which the *gusla* players, their playing ended, fling to the stars in a last rushing firework of chords.

Immediately after, the dances were resumed, with a spring, a dash, surprising in a society where we may amuse ourselves only in conventional ways. Certainly there was, as Lebeau had said, something in this fête that was out of the common, something ardent, feverish, passionate, which was

felt in the clasp of the arms around the waists, in the spring of the dancers, in certain glittering looks that crossed each other, even in the cadence of the waltzes, the mazurkas, which rang at times with the clanking of swords and spurs. Toward the end of balls, when morning pales the windows, the last hour of pleasure has a hurried ardour, a tired intoxication. But on this occasion the ball had hardly begun before the hands of all were burning in their gloves, hearts were beating beneath the corsage bouquets or the diamond orders, and as each couple passed, lost in a cadenced love, eyes rested long and tenderly upon them, smiling. All present knew that those handsome youths, the nobles of Illyria exiled with their princes, and the nobles of France ever ready to give their blood to the good cause, were to start at dawn of day on a bold and perilous expedition. Even in case of victory, how many would return of those high-spirited young men who now enrolled themselves without a count of cost? How many, within a week, would bite the earth, lying on mountain slopes, the sound of that mazurka still humming in their ears to the beat of their ebbing life-blood? 'T was the nearness of danger, mingling with the joy of a ball the anxiety of a night-watch, that made those young eyes glitter with tears and flashes, audacity and surrender, — for what could be denied to him who goes, who goes to death, it may be? That death which hovered in the air, whose wing swept round them in the cadence of the violins, how it tightened the em-

brace, and hastened the avowal! Fugitive loves! meeting of ephemera in a single ray of sunshine! They had hardly seen each other, they might never meet again, but here were two hearts chained. Some, the more haughty of the women, tried to smile in spite of their emotion; but what gentleness beneath that pride! And all this as they danced with heads thrown back and locks floating, each couple fancying themselves alone, hid, lost in the twining magic whirl of a waltz of Brahms or a mazurka of Chopin.

One was there, vibrating too, and deeply moved. It was Méraut, in whom the notes of the *guzlas*, soft and savagely energetic in turn, had awakened the adventurous, bohemian spirit which lies at the bottom of all the sun-temperaments, with a mad desire to rush afar through unknown paths to the Light, to adventure, to battle, to do some bold and valiant action for which women would admire him. Méraut, who did not dance, who had never fought, the intoxication of this ball of heroism attained him; and to think that all this youth was departing, to give its blood, to do great deeds and dangerous emprises, while he remained behind with old men, children! To think that, having organized the enterprise, he must leave it to be carried on without him! All this was sadness, hardship inexpressible. The idea, the ideal, was put to shame before action! It may be that this wringing of the heart, this desire to die, poured into him by the songs and the Slavic dances, was not disconnected with the radiant pride of Fre-

derica on the arm of Christian II. How happy he felt her to be in beholding, at last, the king, the warrior in her husband! . . Haïkouna, Haïkouna, in the clash of arms thou canst all forget and all forgive, — betrayal, lies: what thou lovest above all things is personal valour; on that thy handkerchief, warm with thy tears, with the faint fragrance of thy face, is cast. . . And while he thus bemoaned himself, Haïkouna, who saw, in the corner of the salon, that broad poetic brow where the thick rebellious locks, so little in the fashion, massed themselves, Haïkouna smiled, and made him a sign to come to her. It seemed as though she had divined the reason of his sadness.

"What a beautiful fête, Monsieur Méraut!"

Then, lowering her voice: —

"I owe this, too, to you. . . But we owe you so much . . . we know not how to thank you."

It was he, indeed, whose robust faith had breathed upon the dying flames, given hope to despair, and prepared the rising which on the morrow was to turn to action. The queen did not forget him, she; there was not a person in that illustrious assembly to whom she would have spoken with that deferent kindness, that glance of gratitude and sweetness, there, before them all, in the midst of the respectful circle ranged around the sovereigns. But Christian II. turned towards him, again taking Frederica's arm.

"The Marquis de Hezeta is here," he said to Élysée. "Have you seen him?"

"I do not know him, Sire. . ."

"But he says that you and he are old friends. . . See, there he is."

The Marquis de Hezeta was the leader who, in the absence of old General Rosen, was to command the expedition. In the last attempt of the Duke of Palma he had shown astonishing qualities as a corps commander, and never, had he been listened to, would the affair have ended as it did. When he saw his efforts wasted, and the Pretender himself giving the signal and the example of flight, the *cabecilla*, seized with lassitude and misanthropy, flung himself into the Basque mountains, and lived there, safe from childish conspiracies, false hopes, sword-thrusts into water, which exhausted his moral forces. He wished to die obscurely in his own country, but was now once more tempted forth to adventure by the seductive royalism of Père Alphée and the renown for bravery of Christian II. The ancient nobility of the partisan, his romantic life of exile, persecution, grand and dashing strokes, and fanatical cruelty, all this surrounded the Marquis Don José Maria de Hezeta with an almost legendary interest, and made him now the personage of the ball.

"Good-evening, Élý . . ." he said, coming up to Élysée with extended hand, and calling him by his child's name in the old days of the Enclos de Rey. . . "Yes, yes, it is I . . . your old master . . . Monsieur Papel."

The black coat, laden with crosses and orders, the white cravat had not changed him, nor yet the additional score of years that lay upon that huge

dwarf's-head, so swarthy with powder and the tan of the mountain air that his frontal vein, terrible and characteristic, was scarcely seen. With its disappearance his royalist infatuation seemed attenuated, as if the *cabecilla* had left in his Basque beretta, which he flung into a torrent at the end of his last campaign, a part of his old beliefs, his early illusions.

Élysée was strangely surprised to hear the talk of his old master, of the man who had made him what he was.

"You see, my little Élу . . ."

The little Élу was two feet taller than himself, and not lacking in gray hairs.

". . . it is all over, there are no kings now. . . The principle is alive, but the men are wanting. Not one of these unhorsed ones is capable of getting back into the saddle . . . and not one of them really wishes to. . . Ha! what I've seen, what I've seen, during this last war! . ."

A bloody mist seemed to cross his brow and inject his eyes, fixed and as if enlarged by a vision of shame, cowardice, treachery. . .

"But all kings are not alike," protested Méraut, "and I am sure that Christian . . ."

"Yours is worth no more than ours. . . A child, a mere enjoyer. . . Not an idea, no will in those eyes of pleasure. . . Look at him now!"

He pointed to the king, who was waltzing past them, his eyes vague, his forehead moist, his small head bending to the bared shoulder of his partner, inhaling it with his open mouth as if he

would fain have rolled there. In the rising intoxication of the ball, the pair passed on, touching them with their panting breaths but without seeing them; and as the company crowded into the gallery to see Christian II., the finest waltzer in his kingdom, dance, Hezeta and Méraut took refuge in the deep embrasure of an open window looking on the Quai d'Anjou. They stayed there a long time, half within the whirl and tumult of the ball and half in the cool fresh shadow, the stilling silence of the night.

"Kings believe no longer . . . they *will* no longer. Why should we strive for them?" said the Spaniard, with a sullen air.

"You believe in them no longer. . . And yet you go to-morrow?"

"Yes, I go."

"Without hope?"

"One only. . . That of getting my head broke; my poor head, which I know not where to lay."

"And the king?"

"Oh! as for him, I am easy enough. . ."

Did he mean to say that Christian II. was not yet gone, or that, like his cousin the Duke of Palma, he would always know how to get safely back from a battle? Hezeta did not explain himself further.

Around them the ball continued its giddy whirl, but Élysée saw it now through the discouraged eyes of his old master and his own disillusions. He felt an immense pity for that valiant youth which so gayly was preparing to fight beneath

leaders whose faith was gone; already the fête, its scene confused, its lights veiled, disappeared to his eyes in the smoke of a battlefield, in a great *mêlée* of disaster, from which the unknown dead were gathered up. For an instant, in order to shake off that threatening vision, he leaned upon the window-sill above the deserted quay, on which the palace shed great squares of light that reached beyond it to the Seine. And the water to which he listened, always tossing and tumultuous at this angle of the Isle, mingled the noises of its current and its furious dash against the arches of the bridge with the sighs of the violins and the rasping plaints of the *guslas*, leaping in short gasps like the sobs of a heart oppressed or spreading itself in weltering waves like the blood of an open wound.

XII.

THE NIGHT-TRAIN.

"WE leave to-night, eleven o'clock, Lyons Station. Destination unknown. Probably Cette, Nice, or Marseilles. Take warning."

When this note, hastily scratched off by Lebeau, reached the Avenue de Messine, the Comtesse de Spalato had just left her bath, all fresh, fragrant, and supple, and was moving about her boudoir, watering and taking care of her flowers and her green plants, gloved to the elbows in Swedish kid for this excursion through the artificial garden. She showed no emotion, but stopped a moment to reflect in the calm half-light of the closed blinds; then she made a little resolute gesture and shrugged her shoulders as if to say: "Bah! who wants the end must take the means. . ." After which she rang for her maid, to be put under arms to receive the king.

"What will madame put on?"

"Nothing. . . I shall stay as I am. . ."

And certainly nothing could be more becoming to her than that long garment of pale blue flannel, in soft, clinging folds, a great fichu tied, childlike, behind her waist, and her black hair, twisted, curled and raised very high, showing the nape of

the neck, and the starting line of the shoulders, which could easily be imagined of a brighter tone than the face, the brightness of warm and polished amber.

She thought, with reason, that no formal toilet could equal this dishabille, which enhanced the simple, girlish air the king so delighted in; but this decision obliged her to breakfast in her chamber, for she could not, of course, go downstairs in such attire. She had organized her household on a grave and serious footing; there was nothing here of the fantastic and bohemian allurements of Courbevoie. After breakfast she installed herself in her boudoir, from which a wide veranda projected over the avenue, and there, peacefully seated and rosy in the reflection of the window shades, she watched for the king. Christian never came before two o'clock; but from that hour an altogether novel emotion began in her placid nature, namely: expectant waiting — at first quivering slightly like a ripple in the water, then agitated, feverish, humming. Carriages were rare at that hour on the tranquil avenue, now bathed in sunshine between its double rows of plane-trees and new hotels, ending in the gilded railings and lamp-posts of the Parc Monceaux. At the faintest roll of wheels Séphora drew aside the blind to see who was coming, and her expectation, each time balked, was irritated by that exterior quietude, that rural calmness.

What had happened? Would he really go without seeing her?

She sought for reasons, pretexts; but when we are waiting, all else waits; the whole being remains in suspense, and ideas, floating, disconnected, are no more completed than words that are stammered by the lips. Séphora felt this torture, this swooning, in the tips of her fingers where all nerves reach and quiver. Again she raised the rose-coloured linen of the shade. A warm breeze stirred the branches like green feathers, a cool breath rose from the roadway, which the water-carts were bathing in spasmodic jets, stopped for the passing of carriages, now more numerous, on their way at five in the afternoon to the Bois. By this time she was seriously afraid that the king had abandoned her, and she hastily despatched two letters to him, one addressed to the house of Prince d'Axel, the other to the club. Then she dressed, not being able with propriety to remain till evening as a young girl fresh from her bath; after which she wandered, first from her chamber to her boudoir and her dressing-room, and finally over all the house, striving to allay her expectation by restless motion.

It was not a little cocotte's cage that la Spalato had purchased, nor one of those stupendous houses with which a thousand contractors have encumbered the new quarters of western Paris, but an artistic mansion, worthy of the names of its surrounding streets: Murillo, Velasquez, Van Dyck; a house distinguished from all its neighbours, from the pediment of its frontal to the knocker on its door. Built by Count Ponicki for his mistress, an ugly

woman, whom he paid every morning with a thousand-franc note folded in four and laid upon the marble of her toilet-table, this marvellous dwelling had been sold hap-hazard, with all its art-furniture, for two millions on the death of the rich Polish nobleman, who left no will, and Séphora had obtained at one stroke these treasures.

By the solid carved wooden staircase, capable of bearing the weight of a carriage and four, which gave to the serious beauty of its present mistress the sombre background of a Dutch picture, the Comtesse de Spalato descended to her three salons on the ground-floor: the Dresden salon, a small room all Louis XV., containing a ravishing collection of vases, statuettes, enamels, in that fragile art of the eighteenth century which seems to have been moulded by the rosy fingers of favourites and animated by the roguery of their smile. Next was the salon of the ivories, where, in glass cases lined with flame-colour were Chinese ivories in a medley of little personages, trees with fruits of precious stones, fishes with jade eyes, and certain other ivories of the middle ages, dolorous and impassioned in expression, on which the blood in red wax of the crucifixes made stains as on the pallor of human flesh. The third room, lighted from above, and hung in Cordova leather, was awaiting the time when Père Leemans should complete its furnishing. Usually the soul of the daughter of the "brocante" exulted amid these lovely things embellished by the bargain she had made of them; but to-day she comes and goes without looking,

without seeing, her thought afar, lost in irritating arguments... What! would he really go in this way?.. Then he did not love her!.. And she had felt so sure that he was captured, netted!..

The servant whom she had despatched with her letters returned. No news of the king. He had not been seen anywhere... Ah! that was Christian indeed!.. Knowing himself weak, he was fleeing, hiding, escaping her... A rush of furious anger swept for an instant from her natural calmness the woman who possessed herself so well. She would have torn, broken, everything about her were it not for her long habit of *sale*, which put a ticket of the price, as one might say, visibly on every object. Flinging herself at last into an arm-chair as the twilight deepened on her treasures, she saw them fleeing, disappearing in the dusk together with her dream of a colossal fortune. The door opened violently.

"Madâme la Comtesse is served."

She was forced to sit down to table alone, in the majestic dining-room, adorned on its eight panels with grand portraits by Franz Hals, valued at eight hundred thousand francs, — stern, strong faces, stiff and solemn in their ruffs, but less solemn than the white-cravatted butler who is carving on a side-table the dishes which a pair of impassible flunkeys dressed in nankeen are to serve to their mistress. The irony of this pompous attendance, contrasting with the desertion that threatened her, made her heart wince with vexation; one might almost have thought that the kitchen department suspected her

trouble, so stiffly did the footmen enforce their ceremonious disdain as she ate, and waited till she had finished, motionless and grave as a photographer's assistant who has fixed a client before the lens.

Little by little, however, the abandoned one returned to her true self, and recovered her nerve. . . No! she would not allow herself to be cast off in this way. . . It was not that she cared for the king, but the affair, the grand stroke, all her self-loves at stake before the eyes of her associates. . . Come! her plan is made. . . Going up to her room she wrote a line to Tom; then, while the servants were dining and gossiping in the lower regions about the solitary and restless day of their mistress, Madame la comtesse, with her little hands, that were far from awkward, packed a valise which had often made its trip from Courbevoie to the Agency, threw around her shoulders a gray woollen cloak for the chilly night, and furtively left her palace on foot, going straight to a stand of street carriages, valise in hand, like a lady-companion who has just received her pay.

Christian II., on his side, had passed his day not less uneasily. Remaining late at the ball with the queen, he woke in the morning with head and heart both full of those heroic strains of the *guslas*. Preparations for his journey, arms to examine, also that uniform of lieutenant-general, not worn since the days of Ragusa, — all this kept him busy till eleven o'clock, surrounded and watched by Lebeau, much perplexed, and not daring to push too far his insinuating questions. At eleven o'clock

the little Court assembled around a low mass said by Père Alphée in the salon, transformed into an oratory, the mantelpiece serving as altar, its velvet lambrequin covered by an embroidered cloth. The Rosens were not present, the old man being in his bed, and the princess having gone to the station with Herbert, who had already started with a party of young men. Hezeta was to leave by the following train, — the little band scattering itself thus along the day to cause no suspicion. This secret mass, which recalled the times of trouble, the exultant head of the monk, the military energy of his gesture and his voice, made the very air itself seem full of incense and of gunpowder, and the religious ceremony the more solemn through the sense of a coming battle.

The breakfast was oppressed by these mingled emotions, though the king put a certain coquetry into leaving behind him none but agreeable memories; affecting towards the queen a tenderly respectful attitude, the affectionateness of which was dashed by the rather distrustful coldness of Frederica. The eyes of the child watched them timidly, for the horrible scene of the other night haunted his young memory, leaving nervous intuitions within it beyond his years. The Marquise de Silvis was exhaling in advance heavy sighs of farewell. As for Élysée, to whose breast confidence had returned, he could scarcely contain his joy, as he thought of this counter-revolution of the People of which he had dreamed so long, this popular uprising to force the doors of a palace and restore

a king. To his mind, success was not doubtful. Christian had by no means the same certainty; but beyond this trifling discomfort of departure — when it seems as though solitude were suddenly made by the receding of objects or beings who have hitherto surrounded us — beyond this feeling he had no unpleasant apprehension, but rather a relief in escaping from a false position, threatened as he was by notes falling due and debts of honour. In case of victory, the civil-list would settle all. Defeat would bring with it, on the contrary, a general and total ruin . . . death, a ball in the forehead, straight between the eyes. . . He thought of that as a final solution to all his troubles of money and of heart. So thinking, his indifference made no bad figure between the queen's absorbed reflections and Élysée's enthusiasm. But as the three were talking together in the garden a groom went by.

"Tell Samy to put the horses in," ordered Christian. Frederica shuddered.

"Are you going out?" she said.

"Yes, for prudence' sake. . . The ball last night will make all Paris talk. . . I ought to show myself . . . let people see me, on the boulevard, at the club. . . Oh! I 'll return to dine with you."

He sprang up the portico at a bound, joyous and free as a boy out of school.

"I shall fear to the very end!" said the queen; and Méraut, doubtful like herself, could say no word to encourage her.

The king, however, had really made strong reso-

lutions. During the mass he had sworn not to see Séphora, knowing well that if she tried to retain him, if she wound her arms about his neck, he would not have strength to leave her. In all sincerity, therefore, he went to his club, where he found a few bald-heads absorbed in silent whist, or in majestic slumber around the tables in the reading-room. The place was all the more lifeless and deserted because they had played very high the night before. In the early morning, as the party of players left the club, Prince d'Axel at their head, it appeared that they met a troop of she-asses ambling past the door, their bells jingling . . . and Monseigneur and the rest called to the donkey-boy. . . They drank warm milk in champagne-glasses, and then these gentlemen, all rather high, jumped astride of the poor little beasts, in spite of their kicks and the cries of the boy, and they ran the most amusing steeple-chase ever seen, the whole length of the Rue de la Paix! . . It was worth hearing, this majestically excited account of M. Bonœil, steward of the Grand-Club: "Ah! it was so droll! . . Monseigneur on that little donkey, obliged to curl up his long legs — for Monseigneur is admirably made in the legs. . . And that imperturbable phlegm of his! . . Ah! if his Majesty had only been there! . ."

His Majesty sincerely regretted having missed that fine show of fools. . . Lucky Prince d'Axel! At open quarrel with the king, his uncle, turned out of his own country for all sorts of Court intrigues, he may never come to the throne, be-

cause the old monarch now talks of remarrying with a young woman and begetting a crowd of little presumptives. But all that does not disturb him the least in the world. To "make fête" in Paris seems to him far more interesting than to make politics "down there". . . Little by little, the spirit of *blague*, of sceptical satire, returned to Christian as he lay extended on the divan, where the prince-royal had left the effluence of his contagious laxity. In the aimless atmosphere of the club, everything — the heroic ardour of the night before, the great attempt of the morrow — seemed to the young king worthless, without glory, without magic, without grandeur. Positively, as one might say, he decomposed as he lay there; and to escape the torpor which was overcoming him like a stupefying poison in all his veins, he rose, and went out into the open air of living, active, circulating humanity.

Three o'clock. The hour at which he usually turned in the direction of the Avenue de Messine, after breakfasting at the club, or at Mignon's. Mechanically his steps took their habitual way through this summer Paris, always a little larger and a little less heady than the winter Paris, but offering charming aspects, prolonged vistas with its verdure massed against stonework, and the shadows of its foliage on the whiteness of the asphalt.

What pretty women were gliding there half-screened by sunshades, with a grace, a seductive charm, a sweet good-humour! What other women

could walk as these did, or drape themselves with motion, or talk, or dress, or do the opposite, like them? Ah! Paris, Paris, city of facile pleasures and brief hours! To think that in quitting all that he was going, perhaps, to get his head broke. But at any rate, what good moments he had had there! — what intelligent and complete enjoyment!

In the fervour of his gratitude the Slav had a sparkle in his eye for all the passing dames who attracted him by a glance or the twirl of a lace skirt spreading fan-like. The knightly king of the morning between wife and son, kneeling in the oratory before departing to recover his kingdom, was far indeed from this pretty flusher of women, his nose on the alert, his conquering hat on his curled little head, with a rosy glow of the fever of pleasure on his cheeks. Frederica was not wrong in cursing the ferment of Paris, and dreading it for this fickle brain, frothy as a wine that will not keep.

At the forking of the Boulevard Hausmann with the Avenue de Messine Christian stopped and let several carriages pass him. This recalled him to reason. How had he come there, — and so quickly? . . The hôtel Potnicki rose in the vaporous light of the western sun with its two little turrets, a Parisian castle, and its alcoved balcony. . . What temptation! Why should he not go there? Why not see for the last time that woman who would remain forever in his life with the dry and thirsty memory of an unsatisfied desire?

At last, after a terrible momentary debate, his

uncertainty plainly visible in the reed-like swaying of that faltering body, he took an heroic decision, jumped into an open cab that was then passing, and was driven to the club. Never would he have had the courage to do this without his oath made to God in the morning during mass. To that pusillanimous soul, the soul of a Catholic woman, that oath carried all before it.

At the club he found a letter from Séphora which, merely by the perfume of its paper, communicated to him the fever in which it was written. Prince d'Axel brought him the second letter, a few hasty, imploring phrases in a writing that the books of J. Tom Levis had never witnessed. But here Christian II., surrounded, sustained, watched, felt himself stronger, being of those to whom the gallery imparts an attitude. He crumpled the letters into his pocket. The gay youth of the club was now arriving, still under the excitement of the tale of the donkey race, related at full length in a morning paper. The sheet was passed from hand to hand, and all as they read it gave that exhausted laugh, that stomach laugh of men worn-out.

"Do we make fête to-night?" asked these young noblemen, absorbing sodas and other hygienic waters, of which the club had an unlimited supply.

Enticed by them, the king went off to dinner at the Café de Londres; not in one of those salons where the well-known hangings had danced a dozen times before their drunkenness, and the mirrors bore their names written and scratched like a

wintry frost upon the panes, but in the cellars, those wonderful catacombs of barrels and bottles drawn up in regular lines, bearing white porcelain tickets and extending as far as beneath the theatre of the Opéra-Comique. Every vintage of France lay sleeping there. The table was laid at the farther end, among the Château-Yquems, which softly beamed, their prostrate, glaucous bottles spangled with reflections from the gas and the coloured-glass chandeliers. This dinner was an idea of Wattelet, who wished to mark the king's departure (known only to himself and Prince d'Axel) by a wholly original repast. But the effect was spoiled by the dampness of the walls and ceilings, which penetrated those present, already worn-out with the fatigues of the night before. Queue-de-Poule went to sleep and only woke by shivering starts. Rigolo said little; he laughed, or pretended to do so, and looked at his watch every five minutes. Was he thinking of the queen, whom this delay in his return would terrify?

At the dessert a few women arrived, — diners at the Café de Londres, who, knowing that the princes were below, left their tables, and, guided by the waiters with candelabra, slipped down into the cellars, their trains over their arms, with little cries and pretences of fright. Nearly all were in low gowns. At the end of five minutes they began to cough and grow pale, shivering on the knees of "these gentlemen," who themselves were protected by the upturned collars of their coats. "A pretty joke," said one of them, more chilly or

less madcap than the rest, "to make us all split our lungs." It was soon decided to take coffee in the salons, and during the removal thither the king disappeared. It was just nine o'clock. His coupé was at the door.

"Avenue de Messine . . ." he said in a low voice, his teeth clenched.

The thought had seized him like a madness. Throughout the dinner he had seen but her, her, breathing of her alone from the bare skins that surrounded him. Oh! to seize her in his arms and be no longer the dupe of her tears, of her prayers! . .

"Madame is out."

It was a dash of cold water in a furnace. Madame was out. He could not doubt it, on beholding the license of the household, delivered over to a crowd of servants, whose coloured ribbons and striped waistcoats Christian saw fleeing in all directions at his entrance. He asked no questions; suddenly sobered, he measured the bottomless abyss into which he had been about to fall. Perjured to God, a traitor to the crown! . . The chaplet was in his burning fingers; he told its beads in *aves*, in thanksgivings, as the carriage rolled to Saint-Mandé through the fantastic aspects and the nocturnal terrors of the night.

"The king!" said Élysée, on the watch at the window, as soon as he saw the lamps of the coupé turning brightly into the courtyard. The king! It was the first word any one had spoken since dinner. As if by magic, faces were illuminated,

tongues were loosened at once. The queen herself, in spite of her apparent calmness, her force of will, could not restrain a cry of joy. She had thought all lost, Christian kept by that woman, abandoning his friends, and forever dishonoured. Not a person about her, during those three mortal hours of expectant waiting, but thought the same, with the same uneasiness; even poor little Zara, whom the queen had kept up, and who, understanding the anguish, the drama of that silence, and without asking one of those questions often so cruel, so oracular in a child's shrill voice, had sheltered himself behind the covers of a large portfolio, whence his pretty face reappeared of a sudden when the king was announced, bathed in tears, which had flowed silently for more than an hour. When asked, later, why he had felt such grief, he owned he was unhappy because he feared the king had gone without kissing him. Loving little soul, to whom this young and lively, smiling father was like an elder brother full of pranks and frolics, a most attractive elder brother, though he made their mother wretched.

Christian's quick, curt voice was heard giving orders. Then he went to his chamber, and five minutes later appeared all equipped for his journey in a little hat with a coquettish buckle and blue band, and dainty gaiters, like a tourist on a beach in one of Wattelet's pictures. The monarch however, was visible beneath the dandy; authority, the grand air, the ease of appearing nobly, no matter under what circumstances. He approached

the queen and murmured a few excuses for being late. Still pale with emotion she said to him, very low: "If you had not come, I should have gone with Zara to take your place." And he knew very well she spoke the truth; he saw her for an instant, her child in her arms amid the balls, as on the balcony of his window that terrible night, and the child closing his beautiful, resigned eyes in face of death. Without replying, he raised Frederica's hand to his lips with fervour; then, with an impetuous, youthful movement he drew her to him and whispered: "Forgive! . . forgive! . ."

Forgiveness! she was still capable of it; but at that instant she saw at the door of the salon, ready to accompany his master, Lebeau, that shuffling valet, the confidant of pleasures and treachery, and the dreadful thought came to her, as she gently disengaged herself: "What if he is lying? . . what if he does not go?" Christian divined it. Turning to Méraut he said: "You will accompany me to the station. . . Samy will bring you back." Then, as time was short, he hurried his farewells, said an amiable word to each, to Boscovich, to the marquise, took Zara on his knee and spoke to him of the expedition he was about to undertake to recover his kingdom; told him never to cause grief to the queen; and if he did not see his father again to remember that he died for the country, doing his duty as a king. A little speech *à la* Louis XIV., really not ill-timed and to which the little prince listened gravely, somewhat disconcerted by the gravity

of the words from lips he had always seen smiling. But Christian was ever the man of the moment, all mobility, and excessive volatility, now wholly occupied with his departure, the chances of the expedition, and more touched than he was willing to show; a feeling which made him shorten the tenderness of the last minute. "Adieu! . . Adieu! . ." he said, as, with a wave of the hand to them all, and a profound bow to the queen, he departed.

Truly, if Élysée Méraut had not for three whole years seen the interior of the royal household troubled by the weaknesses, the shameful frailties of Christian II., he could never have recognized the Rigolo of the Grand Club in the lofty, heroic prince who explained to him his plans, his projects, his political views, so broad, so wise, as they drove at a rapid pace to the Lyon station.

The royalist faith of the tutor, always a little superstitious, beheld in this a divine intervention, a privilege of caste, the king recovering himself, as he should, at a vital moment, by grace of consecration and heredity; and, without explaining to himself exactly why, this moral rebirth of Christian, foreshadowing, foretelling his restoration, caused him an inexpressible distress, a singular jealousy of which he would not analyze the cause. While Lebeau was engaged in buying tickets and registering the luggage, they walked together up and down the long waiting-room, and in the solitude of this night departure the king could not keep himself from thinking of Séphora

and his tender escortings of her to the Saint-Lazare station. While under the influence of this memory a woman who passed them attracted his eye; the same height, a certain something of that virtuous yet coquettish step. . .

Poor Christian! poor unwilling king!

At last, however, he was in a carriage, the door of which Lebeau opened to him, one of the usual carriages for all travellers, so as not to attract attention. He flung himself into a corner, in haste to be done with departure, to be off. . . This slow tearing himself away was painful to him. A whistle, the train moves, draws out, leaps noisily over the bridges that crossed the sleeping suburbs with their rows of lamps, and reached the open country. Christian II. breathed freely; he felt himself strong, saved, out of danger; he would almost have sung were he alone in the carriage. But at the farther end, by the other window, a little figure, sunk in the dark corner seemed to shrink with the desire to escape attention. 'T was a woman. Young, old, ugly, pretty? The king — mere habit — cast a look that way. Nothing stirred but the two feathers of a little hat, which seemed to droop and fold as if to rest. "She sleeps," he thought, "and so will I. . ." He stretched himself out, wrapped a rug about him, and looked vaguely for a time at the silhouettes of the trees and bushes confused and softened by the darkness and seeming to fall one upon another as the train went by, at the mile-posts, at the clouds errant on the midnight sky. His eyelids,

growing heavy, were about to close when he felt upon his cheek the caress of a soft curl and lowered eyelids, a violet breath, and two lips murmuring upon his lips: "Cruel!.. without bidding me farewell!" . . .

Ten hours later, Christian II. awoke to a sound of cannon, to the blinding light of a country sun checkered with murmuring foliage. He had dreamed that he was mounting at the head of his troops beneath a hail of fire the steep ascent from the port of Ragusa to the citadel. But instead of that he awoke to find himself motionless in a vast bed, his eyes and brain blurred, his limbs resting in a delightful lassitude. What had happened? Little by little he saw more clearly; he gathered himself together. He was at Fontainebleau, in the hôtel du Faisan, opposite to the forest, where the green and close-pressed treetops rose in the blue of ether, while the cannon of the neighbouring camp was being exercised. And the living reality, the visible link of his ideas, Séphora, was seated before that eternal secretary (seen nowhere now but in hotels) writing actively with a pen that spluttered.

She saw in a mirror before her the admiring, grateful glance of the king, and replied, without turning round, by a tender kiss from her eyes and the tip of her pen, after which she continued to write placidly, showing the glimmer of a smile at the corner of those seraphic lips. "A telegram that I am sending just to reassure my people," she said, as she rose to ring the bell. The de-

"The despatch given, and the waiter gone, she opened the window."

the profile of a beloved woman, without other hope, other memory, other desire than her caresses, the poetic nature of the Slav poured itself out. Oh! to live there, both of them, they alone, in the little house of a keeper, moss and thatch without, a soft, luxurious nest within! .. He wanted to know when she had begun to love him; what impression had he made on her at first? He translated for her the love-songs of his native land, with kisses on her throat and on her eyes; and she listened, feigning to comprehend, to reply, her eyelids closing, heavy from want of sleep.

Eternal discord in the duets of love! Christian wished that they should bury themselves in solitary, unexplored places; Séphora sought the celebrated points, the curiosities of the forest, the places shown where boulders trembled, and rocks wept, and trees were blasted, and the people sheltered in huts and caves, from which they ran at the slightest sound of wheels. She hoped to escape in this way the wearisome and monotonous canticle of love, while Christian was admiring her touching patience in listening to the interminable talk of the worthy country-people, who have time and to spare for all they do.

At Franchart she insisted on drawing water from the famous well of the old monks, so deep that it takes the bucket twenty minutes to come up. Fancy how amusing to Christian! .. Next was a woman medalled like an old gendarme, who showed them the beauties of the site, the ancient pond on the banks of which the stag was

always taken, — an old story told in the same language for so many years that she fancied she had belonged to the convent, and, three centuries later, had been present in person at the sumptuous country pleasure-parties of the first Empire. "It was here, monsieur, madame, that the great emperor sat down with all his Court;" and she showed among the bushes a granite bench long enough for three or four persons at most. Then in a lofty tone: "Opposite, the empress, with her ladies of honour. . ." It was sinister, this evocation of imperial pomp amid the fallen rocks and gnarled and twisted trees, and arid gorse. "Come, Séphora! . ." said Christian. But Séphora was looking at an esplanade where, according to the guide, they were taking the little King of Rome when he saw in the distance his august parents and stretched his arms to them. This vision of the child-prince reminded the King of Illyria of his little Zara. The child rose up before him, held by Frederica, and looked at him with his great sad eyes as if asking him what he was doing there. But it was only a vague reminiscence quickly smothered, and they continued their way beneath those oaks of all sizes, the meeting-places of famous hunts, through the slopes of green valleys and along the crest of hills overlooking the amphitheatres of crumbling granite or gravel-pits where fir-trees ploughed the red and sandy soil with their strong projecting roots.

Presently they were following a dark path impenetrably shady, with deep, damp ruts. On either

channel. The coming and going of uniforms, of convoys, all that camp activity in the open air and the setting sun, that fortifying sight of soldiers in the field, roused his nomad and warrior-race instincts. The carriage, rolling along the mossy green carpet of the wide avenue, caused all the soldiers, busy in pitching tents or in making soup, to lift their heads, and watch the smiling civilian and his pretty companion pass. Christian would fain have spoken to them, harangued them, plunging his eyes beneath the copses to the very extremity of the camp. In front of a commanding officer's tent standing a little apart on a level piece of ground, a beautiful Arab horse was rearing, nostril expanded, mane to the breeze, and neighing for the warrior summons. The Slav's eyes sparkled. Ah! the fine life a few days hence! the good solid blows he was soon to give! But what a pity that Lebeau in going on to Marseilles had taken the luggage with him! How he wished that she might see him in his lieutenant-general's uniform! Thus exciting himself, he fancied the gates of the towns all forced, the republicans put to flight, and he pictured his triumphal entry into Leybach, the streets gay with banners. She would be there, thank God! He would send for her and install her in a splendid palace at the gates of the town. There they would continue to see each other as freely as in Paris. To these fine projects Séphora did not answer very much. No doubt she would have preferred to keep him for herself, wholly her own; and Christian admired

side a line of great tree-trunks, like the columns of a cathedral formed silent naves, where the patter of a squirrel or the fall of a detached leaf like a bit of gold was heard. An immense sadness seemed to fall from those tree-tops, those branches without birds, sonorous and empty as deserted houses. Christian, full of his love, deepened its passion as the day advanced with a note of melancholy and mourning. He told how before departing he had made his will, and dwelt on the emotion those words from beyond the grave, written when full of life, had caused him.

"Yes, very annoying . . ." said Séphora, like one who is thinking of something else. But he believed himself so loved, he was so accustomed to be loved, that he paid no heed to her absent-mindedness. He even consoled her in advance in case of misfortune; he traced her a plan of existence; she must sell the house in the Avenue de Messine, retire to the country, and live with her memories. It was all adorably conceited, naïve, and sincere; he felt in his heart a sadness of farewell which he mistook for presentiments. And then in a lowered voice, their hands clasped, he spoke of the other world. Round his neck was a medal of the Virgin, which never left him; he now took it off — for her. You can imagine Séphora's happiness! . .

After a while an artillery encampment, the gray tents of which became visible through the branches, the light smoke, the unbridled horses, tethered for the night, turned the king's thoughts to another

channel. The coming and going of uniforms, of convoys, all that camp activity in the open air and the setting sun, that fortifying sight of soldiers in the field, roused his nomad and warrior-race instincts. The carriage, rolling along the mossy green carpet of the wide avenue, caused all the soldiers, busy in pitching tents or in making soup, to lift their heads, and watch the smiling civilian and his pretty companion pass. Christian would fain have spoken to them, harangued them, plunging his eyes beneath the copses to the very extremity of the camp. In front of a commanding officer's tent standing a little apart on a level piece of ground, a beautiful Arab horse was rearing, nostril expanded, mane to the breeze, and neighing for the warrior summons. The Slav's eyes sparkled. Ah! the fine life a few days hence! the good solid blows he was soon to give! But what a pity that Lebeau in going on to Marseilles had taken the luggage with him! How he wished that she might see him in his lieutenant-general's uniform! Thus exciting himself, he fancied the gates of the towns all forced, the republicans put to flight, and he pictured his triumphal entry into Leybach, the streets gay with banners. She would be there, thank God! He would send for her and install her in a splendid palace at the gates of the town. There they would continue to see each other as freely as in Paris. To these fine projects Séphora did not answer very much. No doubt she would have preferred to keep him for herself, wholly her own; and Christian admired

that silent abnegation which placed her so truly in her station as mistress of the king.

Ah! how he loved her, and how quickly that evening at the hotel des Faisans went by in their red room; the great light curtains dropped before the summer evening of a little town with its few lights, humming with the talk of promenaders or of persons before their doors, — soon dispersed, however, by the "taps" of drum and bugle. What kisses, what follies, what passionate promises, going to rejoin the kisses and oaths of the night before! Delightfully weary, pressing against each other, they listened to their hearts beating with great throbs, while the warm wind shook their curtains, after murmuring in the trees and scattering the drops of a fountain in the little garden of the hotel, that resembled an Arab patio, into which gleamed the red and flickering lamp of the office.

One o'clock. It was time to go. Christian dreaded this wrench at the last moment, believing that he should have to struggle against prayers and appeals that would summon all his courage to withstand. On the contrary, Séphora was ready first, determined to accompany him to the station, less anxious for her love than for the honour of her royal lover. . . Ah! if he could only have heard the "ouf!" of relief she gave, cruel creature, when, standing alone upon the platform she saw the two green eyes of the train wind away in the distance! If he could but have known how glad she was to return to the hotel alone for a night's rest, saying to herself as the empty omnibus jolted over the

old paved streets of Fontainebleau, in a composed tone, utterly without any loverlike emotion: "Now, if Tom has only done what is necessary! . ."

Most assuredly Tom had done what was necessary; for on the arrival of the train at Marseilles, Christian II., getting out of his carriage, valise in hand, was much astonished to see a flat cap with silver lace approach him and request, very politely, that he would enter the office for a moment.

"Why? . . Who are you?" asked the king, very haughtily.

"Commissary of inspection," the flat cap replied, bowing.

In the office, Christian found the prefect of Marseilles, a former journalist, with a red beard and a shrewd and lively face.

"I regret to inform your Majesty that your journey ends here," he said with exquisite politeness. "My government cannot allow a prince to whom France has given hospitality to profit by that privilege to conspire and arm against a friendly nation."

The king attempted to protest. But every detail of the expedition was known to the prefect.

"You intended to embark at Marseilles; your companions at Cette, on a steamer from Jersey . . . the landing to be made on the beach at Gravosa; the signal two rockets, one on board, the other on shore. . . You see we are thoroughly informed. . . So they are at Ragusa; and I am saving you from a veritable ambuscade."

Christian II., thunderstruck, asked himself who could possibly have revealed information known only to himself, the queen, de Hezeta, and one other, whom he was far indeed from suspecting. The prefect smiled in his blond beard.

"Come, monsieur," he said, "you must make up your mind to it. The affair is a failure. You may be more lucky another time — and more prudent also... At present I entreat your Majesty to accept the shelter which I offer at the prefecture. Elsewhere you will be at the mercy of annoying curiosity. The affair is known in the town..."

Christian made no immediate reply. He looked round at the little office with its green arm-chair, green boxes, porcelain stove, and the huge cards marked with train departures, the miserably bourgeois corner where his heroic dream had come to nought and the last echoes of Rodoïtza died away. He was like a traveller in a balloon, starting for heights above all summits and coming down almost at the same place in a peasant's hovel with his poor collapsed aerostat, a bundle of gummed cloth, under the roof of a stable.

He ended however, by accepting the invitation, and found in the prefect's apartments a really Parisian interior, — a charming wife, very good musician, who after dinner and a general conversation, in which were reviewed all the topics of the day, sat down to the piano and turned over the score of a recent opera. The lady had a very pretty voice and sang agreeably; little by little, Christian approached her and talked music and

opera. The "Echos of Illyria" was lying on the piano between the "Reine de Saba" and the "Jolie Parfumeuse." Madame requested the king to show her the time and tone of his native songs. Christian II. sang several of the popular airs: "Sweet eyes, blue as summer skies," and "Young girls, listen as you braid your hair. . ."

And while he thus leaned, pale and seductive, on the piano, taking the intonations and the melancholy attitude of an exile, afar on the Illyrian seas, where the "Echos" sang of waves snow-tipped and shores of bristling cactus, a fine enthusiastic band of youth and hope, whom Lebeau had neglected to delay, was sailing joyously to death, with wind abaft and cries of "Long live Christian II.!"

XIII.

IN THE CHAPEL.

"My dear love, we have just been brought back to the citadel of Ragusa, M. de Hezeta and I, after a session of ten hours in the Corso theatre, where the council of war appointed to try us was sitting. We are unanimously condemned to death.

"I must tell you that I like it better so. At least one now knows what to expect, and we shall be no longer in solitary confinement. I may read your dear letters, and I can write to you. Silence was choking me. To know nothing of you, my Colette, of my father, of the king, whom I thought killed, the victim of an ambush! Happily his Majesty escapes with a sad disappointment and the loss of a few loyal servants. Things might have been worse.

"The newspapers must have told you—have they not?—how matters turned out. The counter-order of the king by some incredible fatality never reached us. At seven in the evening, as agreed upon we were to leeward of the islands, which was the rendezvous: Hezeta and I on deck, the others below, all armed, equipped, with your pretty cockade in their hats. We cruised about for two hours, three hours. Nothing in sight but fisher-

men's boats or those great feluccas of the coast-guard service. Night came on and with it a sea-fog very hindering to our meeting with the king. After long waiting, we ended by thinking that his Majesty's steamer must have passed ours without seeing us, and that he himself might have landed. And sure enough, from the shore where we were told to expect our signal, a rocket went up. That signified: 'Disembark!' No longer any doubt, the king was there; we started to join him.

"In virtue of my knowledge of the country—many a time I have shot wild-duck along this coast—I commanded the first boat, Hezeta the second, M. de Miremont the third with the Parisians. We were all Illyrians in my boat and our hearts beat high. The country was before us!—that black shore rising in the fog and ending in a small red speck, the revolving light of Gravosa; still, the silence on the shore surprised me. Nothing but the sound of receding waves, like the clapping of wet cloths; not that murmur which the most silent of crowds must make, the clicking of arms, the panting of restrained breaths.

"'I see our men! . .' said San Giorgio, in a low voice close beside me.

"We discovered, the moment we sprang ashore, that what we had taken for the king's volunteers were clumps of cactus and Barbary figs behind the beech. I advanced. No one. But the sands were trampled and cut up. I said to the marquis: 'It is suspicious. . . Let us re-embark.' Un-

fortunately the Parisians arrived just then. There was no restraining them. Away they went, scattering along the shore, examining the bushes, the copses. All of a sudden, a line of fire, the crackle of a volley. They shouted: 'Treachery! . . treachery! . . get back!' and rushed for the boats. A regular helter-skelter like sheep, maddened, jostling, into the sea. A moment of wild panic, lighted by the moon, just risen, which showed us our English sailors escaping with all oars to the ship. . . But it did not last long. Hezeta was the first to spring forward, revolver in hand. 'Avanti! . . avanti! . .' What a voice! The whole shore resounded with it. We flung ourselves behind him. . . Fifty against an army! . . There was nothing to do but die. That is what they all did, with a grand courage: Pozzo, de Melida, the little de Soris, your lover of last year, Henri de Trébigne — calling out to me in the mêlée: 'Look here, Herbert, we miss the guzlas. . .' and Jean de Véliko, who sang 'La Rodoïtza' as he sabred his way, all — all — fell; I saw them on the shore, lying on the sand, looking up to the sky. The rising tide came up and buried them, the dancers at our ball! . . Less fortunate than our comrades, the marquis and I, sole survivors of that hail-storm, were taken prisoners, bound, and ridden into Ragusa on mule-back, your Herbert roaring with impotent rage, while Hezeta, very calm, said merely: 'It is fate. . . I expected it! . .' Strange man! How could he know that we should be betrayed, sacri-

ficed, received on landing with pointed guns and volleys of bullets? And if he knew it, why did he lead us? However, the stroke has missed; the game is still to play again with more precautions.

"I now understand from your dear letters, which I never tire of reading and rereading, why the settlement of our case has hung on so long, why these sessions of black robes in the citadel, these negotiations about our two lives, these ups and downs and long delays. So it seems that the wretches are treating us as hostages, hoping that the king, who would not renounce his rights for hundreds of millions, would yield at last, rather than sacrifice two of his faithful servants. And you are angry, dear, that he does not; you are amazed, blinded by your tenderness, that my father does not urge him in favour of his son. But a Rosen — could a Rosen do so base a thing? . . He does not love me less, the poor old man, and my death will be to him an awful blow. As for our sovereigns, whom you accuse of cruelty, *we* do not have, in judging them, the lofty point of view from which they govern men. They have duties, rights, outside of common rules. Ah! what things could Méraut tell you about that. I feel them, but I cannot express them. Thoughts stay within, they will not come out; my jaws are too heavy. How many a time has this hampered me with you, whom I love so much, but to whom I could never tell it! Even here, separated by so many leagues and those thick iron bars, the thought

of your sweet gray eyes, so Parisian, those mischievous lips beneath the pretty little nose that wrinkles to deride me, still intimidates, still paralyzes me.

"And yet, before I leave you forever, I must indeed strive to make you understand for once, that I have loved but you in this world, and that my life began the day when I first saw you. Do you remember it, Colette? It was in those shops in the Rue Royale, that agency of Levis. We were there, my father and I, by chance, so-called. You were trying a piano; you played, you sang something so gay, so gay, and it made me long, I knew not why, to weep. Ah! I had fallen in love. . . Who would have thought it! A marriage *à la Parisienne*, a marriage through an agency, to turn into a marriage of love! And since then, in society, in any society, I have seen no woman so delightful as my Colette. You may rest easy, you were always with me, even absent; the thought of your pretty little visage kept me forever in good-humour; I laughed to myself all alone when I thought of it. It is true that you have always inspired me to that — to laughing tenderly. . . Why, even now, when our fate is terrible, especially the way in which they present it to us — Hezeta and I are moved into the chapel, that is to say, into a little cell with plastered walls, where they have raised an altar for our last mass and placed a coffin before each bed and on the walls placards on which is written 'Death . . . Death. . .' — Well, in spite of all that, the room seems gay. I escape

these funereal threats by thinking of my Colette; and when I climb to the barred loop-hole, the lovely landscape, the road which descends from Ragusa to Gravosa, the aloes, the cactus against the sky or the blue sea, remind me of our wedding journey, the Corniche from Monaco to Monte Carlo, and the bells of our mules, carrying a joy as gay and ringing as their own. Oh! my little wife, how sweet you were, dear traveller, with whom I would fain have journeyed longer. . .

"You see now that your image lives and triumphs ever, even on the threshold of death, nay, in death, for I will carry it as a scapulary on my breast, down there, by the Sea-gate, where they will take us in a few hours; it will enable me to fall smiling. And so, dear love, do not grieve too much. Think of the little one, the child that is to be. Keep well for him, and when he is able to understand it, tell him I died like a soldier, standing, with two names upon my lips — my wife's name and my king's.

"I would have liked to leave you a souvenir at my last moment; but they have stripped me of everything, watch, wedding-ring, cravat-pin. I have nothing left but a pair of white gloves, which I meant to wear on our entrance to Ragusa. I will wear them now to do honour to my death, and the prison chaplain has promised me to send them to you.

"And now — adieu, my Colette, darling. Do not weep. I say that to you — and I, my tears are blinding me. Console my father. Poor man!

He, who always scolded me for coming late on duty. I shall come no more... Adieu... adieu... And yet I had so many things to say to you... But no! I have to die... Ah! what a fate!.. Adieu, Colette.

"HERBERT DE ROSEN."

XIV.

A SOLUTION.

"ONE way is left to you, sire."

"Speak out, my dear Méraut; I am prepared for everything."

Méraut hesitated to answer. What he was about to say seemed to him too serious, too completely out of place in that billiard-room where the king had dragged him to play a game after breakfast. But the strange irony which presides over the fate of dethroned sovereigns willed that it should be before that green table, where the balls were rattling with a hollow, sinister sound in the silence and mourning of the house at Saint-Mandé, that the fate of the royal race of Illyria should be decided.

"Well? . ." asked Christian II., stretching forward to touch his ball.

"Well, monseigneur. . . ."

He waited till the king had made his shot and Councillor Boscovich had devoutly marked it, before he continued, with a shade of embarrassment:

"The people of Illyria are like all the other peoples, sire. They like success, strength; and I fear that the fatal issue of our enterprise. . ."

The king turned round, the colour in his cheeks.

"I asked you for the truth, my dear fellow. Useless to wrap it up in all these curl-papers."

"Sire, you must abdicate," said the Gascon, harshly.

Christian looked at him in amazement.

"Abdicate what?" he asked. "I have nothing . . . a fine present to make my son! . . I think he would rather have a new velocipede than that vague promise of a crown at his majority."

Méraut quoted the case of the Queen of Galicia. She had abdicated for her son during exile; and if Don Leo was now upon the throne it was to that abdication that he owed it.

"Eighteen to twelve! . ." said Christian, abruptly . . . "Monsieur le conseiller, you are not marking."

Boscovich started like a frightened hare and sprang to the board, while the king, his body and his mind on the stretch, was completely absorbed in making a wonderful "four-cushioned" stroke. Élysée gazed at him, and his royalist faith was once more put to a rough test before that type of spineless dandy, vanquished without honour, his thin throat wholly exposed by a loose flannel jacket, his eyes, mouth, and the sides of his nostrils still yellow with a jaundice from which he was scarcely recovered after keeping to his bed for a month. The disaster at Gravosa, the cruel end of those fine young men, the terrible scenes to which the trial of Herbert and Hezeta had given rise in the little Court at Saint-Mandé, Colette flinging herself on her knees before her former lover to

obtain her husband's pardon, the slow agony, the waiting with strained ears for that horrible shot which he seemed himself to have commanded, and, above all, his money troubles, the notes to Pichery, falling due — all this savage rancour of an evil fate, though it had not conquered the careless indifference of the Slav, had physically broken him down.

After making his cannon he stood still and, chalking his cue with the utmost care, he asked Méraut, without looking at him: —

"What does the queen think of this project of abdication? Have you spoken to her about it?"

"The queen thinks as I do, Sire."

"Ah!" he exclaimed dryly, with a slight quaver.

Contradiction of human nature! This woman whom he did not love, whose distrustful coldness and clear-sightedness he feared, this woman whom he blamed for having treated him too much as a king and harassed him by a perpetual recall to his duties and prerogatives, — he was now angry with her for no longer believing in him and being ready to abandon him for the profit of their child. He felt it, not as a wound to love, — one of those blows upon the heart that make us cry aloud, — but as the treachery of a friend, a confidence forever lost.

"And you, Boscovich, what do you think?" he said, suddenly turning to his councillor, whose smooth anxious face was convulsively mimicking the expressions on that of his master.

The botanist made a slight gesture of Italian

pantomime, arms wide open, head in his shoulders, a mute "chi lo sa?" so timid, so little compromising that the king could not keep himself from laughing.

"By advice of our council be it understood," he said through his nose, sarcastically, "we will abdicate whenever they like."

Thereupon his Majesty began once more to push about the balls with interest, to the despair of Élysée, who was burning to go and tell the queen of the result of a negotiation she did not wish to take upon herself; for that phantom of a king still awed her, and it was only in trembling that she laid her hand upon the crown which he wanted to be rid of.

The abdication took place soon after. Stoically, the head of the civil and military household proposed his splendid galleries in the hôtel Rosen for the ceremony, to which it is customary to give as much solemnity and authenticity as possible. But the disaster of Gravosa was too recent to use those salons still echoing with memories of the fête; it would indeed have been too sad, too full of evil omen for the reign that was beginning. They contented themselves therefore by inviting to Saint-Mandé certain noble Illyrian and French personages whose signatures were necessary at the bottom of a deed of such importance.

At two o'clock the carriages began to arrive, and the guests, ascending slowly on the carpets laid from the threshold to the bottom of the steps of the portico, were received at the door of the

salon by the Duc de Rosen, tightly buttoned into his general's uniform, and wearing around his neck and above his crosses the grand cordon of Illyria, which he had laid aside without a word when he learned the scandal of the barber Biscarat sporting the same insignia on his Figaro jacket. On his arm and on his sword-hilt the general bore a long black crape; but more significant than even that sign of mourning, was the senile shaking of his head, an unconscious way of ever saying: "No . . . no . . ." which continued with him after the terrible debate in his presence about Herbert's pardon, — a debate in which he positively refused to take part, in spite of Colette's prayers and the revolt of his paternal tenderness. It seemed as though that small hawk's-head of his, forever shaking, bore the penalty of his anti-human refusal, and that henceforth he was sentenced to say "No" to all impressions, all feelings, to life itself — all things becoming nought to him, and nothing being able to interest his mind since the tragic end of his son.

Princesse Colette was present, wearing with much taste a mourning garb that went well with her fair complexion, — a widowhood relieved by a hope already visible in her heavier figure and slower step. Even in the midst of a grief that was really sincere, that little soul of a milliner, choked with futilities, to which the severities of fate brought no improvement, found something to satisfy it, thanks to the coming infant, in a crowd of coquettish and trumpery vanities. Ribbons, laces, the superb

baby's-outfit which she was having embroidered with an initial beneath a prince's coronet, served to divert her grief. The baby should be named Wenceslas or Witold — Wilhelmina if a girl; but very certainly the name should begin with W, because that was a very aristocratic letter, and charming to embroider upon linen.

She was explaining her projects to Mme. de Silvis when the doors were thrown wide open to announce, preceded by a rattle of halberds, the Prince and Princesse de Trébigne, de Soris, the Duc de San-Giorgio, the Duchesse de Melida, Comtes Pozzo, de Miremont, de Véliko. . . Those names, proclaimed aloud, seemed a sonorous echo from the bloody shore where the young victims fell who bore them. And, terrible to see! a circumstance which was to give to the coming ceremony, in spite of all precautions, a fatal and funereal aspect, those who came were in the deepest mourning, clothed in black, gloved in black, swathed in those black woollen stuffs so gloomy to the eye, which imprison, as it were, the free motion and the gestures of women: the mourning of old people, of fathers, mothers, more mournful, more heart-breaking, more cruel to bear than that of others. Many of these unhappy persons left their homes that day for the first time since the catastrophe; torn from their solitude, their seclusion, by devotion to the dynasty. They drew themselves erect to enter, summoning all their courage; but, as they looked on one another — each a dreadful mirror of a common sorrow — standing, with lowered heads

and shuddering shoulders, they felt the tears they saw rise in their eyes, the sighs that could not be restrained beside them on their lips; and soon this nervous contagion seized them all and filled the salon with one long sob of choking moans. Old Rosen alone did not weep: stiffening his tall, inflexible figure he continued to make that pitiless sign: "No! . . no! . . he must die! . . "

That evening, at the Café de Londres, H. R. H. Prince d'Axel, invited with the rest to witness the abdication, related how he had been to a funeral of the first class, with all the family assembled to see the corpse removed. It is true that his Highness himself cut a sorry figure as he entered. He felt frozen, hampered by such silence, such despair; and he was looking about with terror at these old Parcæ when he spied the Princesse Colette. He hastened to seat himself beside her, curious to study the heroine of the famous breakfast on the Quai d'Orsay; and while Colette, at heart much flattered by this attention, greeted his Highness with a doleful and sentimental smile, she little thought that the veiled and glaucous glance he cast upon her was taking mental measure of how the cook-boy's costume had fitted her appetizing person.

"The king, messieurs!"

Christian II., very pale, with a visibly perturbed air, entered the room, leading his son by the hand.

The little prince showed a gravity enjoined upon him, which became him well, increased as it was by the black jacket and the trousers that

he wore for the first time with a certain pride and the serious grace of adolescence.

The queen came next, very beautiful, in a sumptuous mauve gown covered with lace; too sincere to conceal her joy, which shone amid the environing sadness like the glow of her robe beside the mourning garments. She was so happy, so egotistically happy, that she did not bend, even for a moment, to the terrible sorrows that surrounded her, any more than she saw the shivering garden, the fog at the windows, the blackness of an All-Saints' season wandering in a low, dull sky full of mists and torpor.

This day was to stay in her memory, luminous and comforting. So true is it that all is within us; and that the external world is transformed and coloured by the thousand tints of our own passions.

Christian II. placed himself in front of the fireplace at the centre of the salon, having the Comte de Zara on his right, the queen on his left, while a little farther off sat Boscovich, in his ermine as Aulic councillor, at a small clerk's-table. When all were placed, the king, speaking very low, said that he was now prepared to sign his abdication and to make known the reasons for it to his subjects. Then Boscovich rose, and in his sharp, stuttering little voice proceeded to read Christian's manifesto to the nation, a rapid historical review of the early hopes of the reign, the deceptions, the misunderstandings that soon followed, and finally the resolution of the king to retire from public

affairs and confide his son to the generosity of the Illyrian people.

This short epistle, in which the hand of Élysée Méraut had left its mark, was so ill-read, like a wearisome botanical nomenclature, that it gave reflection time to see all there was of futile and derisory in this abdication of an exiled prince, this transmission of powers that did not exist, of rights denied and ignored. The act of abdication, read by the king himself, was as follows: —

"I, Christian II., King of Illyria and Dalmatia, Grand-duke of Bosnia and Herzegovina, etc... etc... declare that of my own will, and without yielding to any foreign influence, I leave and convey to my son, Charles-Alexis-Leopold, Comte de Goetz and de Zara, all my political rights, meaning thereby to retain none but my civil rights as father and guardian over him."

Immediately, at a sign from the Duc de Rosen, all present approached the table to affix their signatures. For a few moments there was movement, the rustling of stuffs, pauses caused by the ceremonial, and the scratching of pens, firm or trembling. Then the homage, the kissing of the new king's hand began.

Christian II. led the way, and acquitted himself of that difficult thing, the homage of a father to his child, by kissing the tips of the fragile fingers with more of airy grace than of respect. The queen, on the contrary, showed a passionate effusion almost religious; the protectress, the brooding mother, became the humble subject. After

her came the turn of Prince d'Axel, and then, all the great seigneurs defiled in hierarchical order, which the little king was beginning to think very long, in spite of the charming dignity of his innocent eyes and of his outstretched hand, that little hand, so white and veined, with the square nails of a child who still plays about, and with wrists that were rather strong and disproportioned to his growth. All these nobles, solemn as this moment seemed to them, and in spite of the sad preoccupations of their personal sorrow, were not men to allow their precedence, according to title and the number of leaves on their coronet, to be taken from them; and Méraut, who was rushing towards his pupil, was suddenly stopped by a "Monsieur, by your leave . . ." which made him step back and brought him face to face with the indignant countenance of the Prince de Trébigne, a terribly asthmatic old gentleman, puffing with difficulty, his dilated eyes protruding as if he was unable to breathe except through them. Élysée, the devotee of tradition, drew respectfully back to allow this relic from the tombs to pass, and went himself the last man to do homage. As he retired, Frederica, standing beside her son, like the mothers of young brides in the sacristies, to receive the after smiles and homage, said to him in a low voice, but exultant and vigorous, as he passed: —

"It is done!"

There was in her intonation a plenitude of joy that was almost ferocious, a relief and comfort unspeakable.

It is done! . . That is, the crown is safe at last from traffic and degradation; she could sleep, and breathe, and live, delivered from continual terrors which warned her of catastrophes and might have made her say, like Hezeta, at each fatal result: "I expected it. . ." Her son would not be dethroned; her son would be king. . . Why, he was so already in his majestic little attitude, his courteous yet lofty greeting. . .

However, no sooner was the ceremony over than the nature of a child came uppermost, and Leopold V. darted joyfully to old Comte Jean de Véliko to announce to him a great piece of news: "Do you know, godpapa, I have a pony . . . a pretty little pony, all for myself. . . The general is to teach me to ride, and mamma, too." Around him the Court pressed and bowed with looks of adoration, while Christian, left rather alone and abandoned, felt a singular, indefinable sensation like the taking of something from his skull, the chill of an absent crown. Positively his head was swimming, and yet he had certainly desired this hour, and cursed, above all, the responsibilities of his position. Then why this uncomfortable feeling, this sadness, now that he saw the shore he hated disappear, and the way at last open to other prospects?

"Well, my poor Christian, I think they have given you your ouistiti. . ."

This from Prince d'Axel, who, in a whisper, consoled him after his fashion.

"You have the luck of it," he went on. . . "I

wish it were I... How happy I should be if some one released me from leaving this charming Paris and going to reign over those walruses of mine, with their white stomachs! .."

He continued in the same tone for a few moments and then the pair, profiting by the tumult and the inattention of the company, disappeared. The queen saw them go; she heard in the courtyard the roll of the king's phaeton, the light wheels of which had never before departed without passing over her heart... What mattered it now? It was no longer the King of Illyria that those women of Paris were taking from her...

On the morrow of Gravosa, in the first moments of his shame, Christian had sworn to himself that he would never see Séphora again. As long as he was in bed, frightened by illness like every Southerner, he thought of his mistress only to curse her, to charge her morally with his own misdeeds; but convalescence, the quickening of his blood, the complete idleness in which memories mingled with dreams have so much power, changed before long these dispositions. At first he excused the woman timidly; he began to look on what had happened as fatality, one of the myriad designs of Providence on whom Catholics are prone to lay all oppressive responsibility.

At last, one day he ventured to ask Lebeau if there was any news of the countess. For all answer the valet brought him a quantity of little notes, which had arrived during his illness, tender,

passionate, timid notes, a flock of white turtle-doves warbling love.

Christian's senses were at once inflamed; he answered from his bed immediately, impatient to resume, the instant he was cured, the romance begun at Fontainebleau.

Meanwhile J. Tom Levis and his wife were spending a delightful holiday in their mansion on the Avenue de Messine. Tom had been unable to bear any longer the weary dulness of his retreat to Courbevoie. He missed his business life, but, above all, he missed Séphora's admiration. Moreover he was jealous, with a stupid, obstinate, lancinating jealousy, like a fish-bone in one's throat, which we think gone and lo, we suddenly feel its prick. And no means of complaining to any one and saying: "Just see what I have got in my throat." Unfortunate Tom Levis, caught in his own trap, inventor and victim of the Grand-Stroke... Séphora's journey to Fontainebleau made him specially uneasy. Several times he tried to recur to the subject, but she always stopped him with such a natural peal of laughter. "What's the matter with you, my poor Tom?.. Where's your head-piece?.." On which he was obliged to laugh, he too; understanding perfectly well that there was nothing between them but drollery and *blague*, and that Séphora's fancy for her merry-andrew would quickly cease if she thought him jealous, sentimental, — "a nuisance," like others.

But at heart he suffered, and wearied of living

away from her; he even wrote verses to her. Yes, the man of the cab, the imaginative Narcisse, had found that vent for his uneasiness, a poem to Séphora! one of those whimsical lucubrations composed by pretentious ignorance, such as are confiscated at Mazas in the cells of the prisoners. Truly, if Christian II. had not fallen ill, J. Tom Levis would certainly have become so.

I leave you to think of the joy with which the buffoon and his wife met again and lived together for several weeks. Tom danced crazy jigs and cut pigeon-wings on the carpet, like a monkey in good humour or an Auriol let loose to caper through the house. Séphora was contorted with laughter, and yet a little troubled by the kitchen department, where the "husband of madame" enjoyed the most thorough discredit. The butler declared that if the "husband of madame" dined at table he would never consent to wait upon him; and as the man was an exceptional butler, chosen by the king, she did not insist, but had the meals taken up to her boudoir by a maid. In like manner, when a visitor arrived, Wattelet or Prince d'Axel, J. Tom disappeared into the dressing-room. Never was husband seen in such a case; but Tom adored his wife; he had her for himself alone, and in a frame which made her seem to him infinitely handsomer. He was in fact the happiest of that band of rascals, among whom delays and postponements were beginning to cast a certain anxiety.

A knot was felt, a stoppage in an affair well launched. The king did not pay a penny on the

notes already due, but was making more incessantly, to the great terror of Pichery and Père Leemans. Lebeau endeavoured to encourage them. "Patience, patience . . . it will all come right. . . It is on the cards. . ." But he was paying nothing, while the other two were piling up in their desks reams of Illyrian paper. The poor "père," no longer possessed of his sturdy composure, came every morning to the Avenue de Messine to obtain reassurance from his daughter and son-in-law. "Then you really think we shall succeed? . ." And he resigned himself to discount again, to discount continually, inasmuch as the only way to run after his money was to send more in pursuit.

One afternoon the countess, making ready to go to the Bois, was flitting from her chamber to her dressing-room beneath the paternal eye of J. Tom, who was sprawling on a *chaise-longue*, a cigar between his teeth, his fingers in the armholes of his waistcoat, enjoying the pretty sight of a woman dressing herself, slipping on her gloves before the psyche, and practising her attitudes. She was ravishing. Her hat was put on, the veil just reaching the eyes, her costume, that of the late autumn, warm and a trifle wadded; while the tinkling of her bracelets and the shimmering jet of her mantle responded to the luxurious sounds of the carriage waiting beneath the windows, to the rattle of its harness, the pawing of its horses, — the whole together forming an equipment under the arms of Illyria.

Séphora was going out with Tom; she was tak-

ing him for a drive on this first day of the Parisian season, round the lake, under a low sky which gives full value to the new fashions and the pretty faces, rested by country sojourns. Tom, very elegant, of a true British chic, was enchanted with this prospect of a drive in a coupé, effaced behind his charming countess, on secret pleasure bent.

Madame was ready; they were just about to start. A last look in the glass... Come!.. Suddenly the entrance gate opened below, and the bell rang hurriedly... "The king!.." And while the husband rushed into the dressing-room, with a terrible squinting of his eyes, Séphora ran to the window just in time to see Christian II. mounting the portico with a conquering air. He flew, wings expanded. "How happy she will be!" he thought as he mounted.

Séphora comprehended that something new had happened, and prepared herself. To begin with, she gave a little cry of surprise, of joyful emotion on seeing him, fell into his arms, and made him carry her to a sofa, before which he knelt.

"Yes, I... Really I... and forever!"

She looked at him with wide-opened eyes, wild with love and hope. And he, plunged in that look, replied to it: —

"Yes, 't is done... I am no longer King of Illyria... Only a man who will spend his life in loving you."

"It is too good... I dare not believe it."

"Here, read.."

She took a parchment from his hand, and slowly unfolded it.

"And so, is it really true, my Christian, that you have renounced — "

"Better than that. . ."

And while she read through the words of the act, he, standing before her, twirled his moustache and gazed at her triumphantly. Then, thinking she did not understand, or at least not quickly enough, he explained the difference between renunciation and abdication; he would be just as free, he told her, as much relieved of duties and responsibilities, without doing injury to the interests of his son. Only the money. . . But they did not need so many millions to make them happy.

She read no more; she listened, her mouth half-opened, her pretty teeth exposed in a fixed smile as if she wanted them to seize what he was saying. She had fully understood, however; oh! yes, she saw plainly enough the crumbling away of their ambitions and of the piles of gold already spent on the affair; she saw the fury of Leemans, of Pichery, of all that band robbed by the false manœuvre of this ninny. She thought of the useless sacrifices, of her six months' wearisome life, sickened with insipidity and perpetual dissimulation, of her poor Tom, now engaged in holding his breath in the next room, while the other before her was expecting an explosion of tenderness, sure of being loved, a conqueror, irresistible, all-powerful. . . It was so droll, the irony was so complete, so fierce! She rose, seized with a frantic laugh,

an insolent, scoffing laugh, which brought into her face a sudden redness, the stirred-up lees of her coarse nature, and passing in front of the stupefied Christian, "Idiot, begone!" she cried to him before she bolted herself into her chamber.

Without a sou, without crown, without wife, without mistress, he cut a sorry figure as he went down that staircase.

XV.

THE LITTLE KING.

OH, magic of words! As if in those four letters of the word "king" lay a force cabalistic, he no sooner ceased to be called the Comte de Zara and bore the name of King Leopold V. than Méraut's pupil was transformed. The patient little boy, pleased in doing well, easy to handle as a bit of soft wax, but without any striking intelligence, came suddenly out of his limbo, awakened by a strange and excessive excitement, and his body was strengthened by the inward flame. His indolence of nature, that desire to lie down or to loll in an arm-chair while they read to him or told him stories, that need to listen, to live by the thoughts of others, changed suddenly into an activity that was not satisfied with the ordinary amusements of his years. Old General de Rosen, now becoming bent and infirm, was forced to recover strength enough to give him his first fencing and shooting and riding lessons. Nothing could be more touching than to see, every morning at nine o'clock, in a clearing of the park enlarged to an arena, the old pandour, in a blue coat, whip in hand, performing his functions of equerry with the air of an old Franconi; always respectful to his king while

correcting the blunders of the pupil. The little monarch trotted and galloped, grave and proud, attentive to the slightest order, while the queen looked on and made observations or gave her advice: "Sit straight, Sire . . . easy on the bit." Sometimes, to make him understand her better, she would spring into the circle and add gesture to words. Ah! how happy she was on the day when, regulating the step of her mare to that of the king's pony, the pair rode together through the wood, the child's silhouette against the dark habit of the horsewoman, who, far from feeling a mother's fears, started the two animals in a vigorous gallop, and showing the way to her son, went as far as Joinville without drawing rein.

And in her also a great change had taken place since the abdication. For a woman superstitious of divine right the title of king henceforth protected the child, defended him. Her tenderness, always strong and deep, no longer had outward manifestations, explosions of caresses; and when at night she went, as she always did, to his room, it was not "to see Zara put to bed." A valet had charge of such matters now, as if Frederica feared to enervate her son, to retard the coming of a manly will by keeping him longer in her too gentle hands. She came solely to hear him say that beautiful prayer from the "Book of Kings" which Père Alphée had taught him: —

"O Lord, who art my God, thou hast placed thy servant on a throne; but I am a child who knows not how to act, and yet I am intrusted with the

people thou hast chosen. Give me therefore wisdom and intelligence. . ."

The little voice rose firm and clear, toned with authority, with a conviction most affecting if one thinks of the exile in this poor suburb, and the distance, far over sea and land, of this hypothetic throne. But for Frederica her Leopold now reigned, and she put into her good-night kiss a proud subjection, an adoration, an indefinable respect, which recalled to Élysée, when he saw this mixture of maternal sentiments, the Christmas carols of his native country in which the Virgin sings as she rocks her infant in the stable: "I am thy servant, and thou art my God."

Some months went by in this way, — a whole winter season, during which the queen was conscious of one shadow only on her joy, on her heaven, now so clear. And it was Méraut who, most unconsciously, was the cause of it. In dreaming both of them the same dream, in mingling their glances and their souls, in walking together closely bound to the same single end, a familiarity was established between them, a community of thought and life which suddenly became embarrassing to Frederica without her being able to say why. When alone with him she ceased to give expression to herself as before; she grew to be afraid of the place this stranger was taking in her most private decisions. Did she divine the feelings in his breast, that brooding ardour so near to her, closer and more dangerous from day to day? A woman never mistakes such feelings.

She wanted to protect herself, to change her course; but how? In her trouble she had recourse to the guide, the adviser of the Catholic wife, to her confessor.

When he was not roaming the country on his royalist propaganda it was Père Alphée who directed the queen. Merely to look at the man was to know him. In this Illyrian priest with the face of a pirate could be seen the blood, the gait, the facial lines of one of those Uscoques, birds of rapine and of storms, the former rovers of the Latin seas. Son of a fisherman in the port of Zara, brought up on the Marina amid trawls and tar, he was picked up on a certain day by the Franciscans on account of his pretty voice; from house-boy he became a choir-boy, grew up in the convent, and was finally one of the heads of the brotherhood; but there always remained to him the passions of a sailor, and on his epidermis the tan of the sea, which the coolness of cloistral stones could never whiten. For the rest, not the least bigoted or scrupulous; able on occasion to play his knife (*cotellata*) for the good motive; a monk who, when State affairs pressed, would despatch in a bunch in early morning all the prayers of the day, and even those of the morrow, "in order to get on," as he said seriously. Thorough in his affections as in his hatreds, he had vowed an unbounded admiration to the tutor introduced by him into the household of the king. Therefore at the first avowal that the queen made of her trouble, her scruples, he pretended not to understand her;

then, as she insisted, he grew angry, spoke harshly to her as to an ordinary penitent, or some rich milliner of Ragusa.

Was she not ashamed to bring such nonsense into a noble cause? What was she complaining of? Had he ever failed in respect to her? Just see how for such ticklish piety, or for the coquetry of a woman who thinks herself irresistible, they were to deprive themselves of a man whom God had certainly put in their path for the triumph of monarchy! . . And in his sailor language, his Italian vehemence, tempered by the sly smile of a priest, he added that people should n't cavil with the good wind sent by heaven, but "spread all sail and take advantage of it." The most upright of women are ever feeble before specious reasoning. Conquered by the monk's casuistry, Frederica told herself that indeed she ought not to deprive her son's cause of such an auxiliary. It was for her to protect herself, to be strong. After all, what did she risk? She even ended by persuading herself that she had been mistaken as to Élysée's devotion and his enthusiastic friendship. . .

The truth was that he loved her passionately. A strange, deep love; driven out again and yet again, but returning slowly along by-ways, until finally it became installed with the invading despotism of conquest. Until then Élysée Méraut had believed himself incapable of a tender sentiment. Sometimes, during his royalist propaganda through "the Quarter," some daughter of bohemia, without understanding a word that he said, had fallen in

love with him for the music of his voice and that which shone in his glowing eyes and his ideal brow, — the magnetic attraction of Magdalens towards apostles. He, bending with a smile, gathered what was offered, enveloping in gentleness and surface affability that incorrigible contempt for womanhood which lies at the bottom of every Meridional. In order for love to enter his heart it had to pass through his powerful brain; and it was in this way that his admiration for the lofty type of Frederica, for that patrician adversity so proudly borne, became at last — through the narrowed life of exile, communion at all hours, at all instants, so many sorrows shared — a true passion, but a humble, discreet passion, without hope, content to burn at a distance, like the tapers of the poor on the lowest step of the altar.

Existence went on, however, always the same in appearance, indifferent to these mute dramas, until the beginning of the month of September. One day the queen, bathed in a beautiful sunshine, that was brightly in keeping with her happy disposition of mind, was taking her walk after breakfast, followed by the duke, Élysée, and Mme. de Silvis, to whom a leave of absence granted to Princesse Colette had given the duties of lady of honour. Frederica led her little Court through the shady paths, draped with ivy, of the English park, turning constantly as she walked along to say some word or some remark with that decided manner which did not lessen in any way her feminine charm. On this occasion she was particu-

larly gay and animated. News had come that morning from Illyria relating the excellent effect produced by the abdication, the name of Leopold V. being already popular in the country-places. Élysée Méraut was triumphant.

"Did not I tell you, Monsieur le duc, that they would actually dote on their little king? . . Childhood, don't you see, regenerates tenderness. It is something like a new religion that we have infused down there, with its naïvetés, its fervours. . ."

And lifting his mass of hair with a violent gesture of both hands that was all his own, he launched into one of those eloquent improvisations which transfigured him, just as the sluggish Arab squatting in rags upon the ground becomes unrecognizable on horseback.

"We are in for it . . ." said the marquise in a low voice with a weary air, while the queen, in order to hear better, sat down on a bench beside the path under the shadow of a drooping ash. The others stood respectfully around her; but little by little the audience evaporated. Mme. de Silvis was the first to retire, to protest visibly, as she never failed to do when occasion offered; and the duke was sent for, to attend to some duty. The queen and Élysée were left alone, but the latter did not perceive it. He continued his discourse, standing in the sunshine which glided across his noble, inspired face, as if on the surface of a smooth stone. At that moment he was beautiful, — with the beauty of intellect, grasping, irresistible; it struck Frederica too suddenly to allow her to hide her admiration.

Did he see it in her green-gray eyes? Received he in return that inward concussion which too keen a sentiment and very near us makes us feel? He stammered, stopped short, panting, and laid upon the queen, on her hair, all spangled with the trembling light, a slow look, burning as a confession. . . Frederica felt the flame of it run through her like a sun, more blinding than that in the heavens, but she had no strength to turn away. And when Élysée, terrified at the words that were rising to his lips, tore himself from her brusquely, it seemed to her, all penetrated as she was with that man, with his magnetic power, as if life itself had left her. A sort of moral swoon overcame her, and she sat there, on that bench, half-fainting, prostrate. . . Lilac shadows flitted on the gravel of the path. Water was rippling in the fountains like a refreshment to the summer afternoon. Nothing was heard in the garden, all blossoms, but a murmur of insects' wings above the fragrant beds, and the sharp sound of a rifle, that of the little king, whose shooting-ground was not far off, at the end of the park, near the wood.

Amid this calmness the queen recovered herself, at first with an impulse of anger, of revolt. She felt insulted, outraged by that look. . . Was it possible? Had she not dreamed it? . . She, the proud Frederica, who, in the dazzle of court-fêtes disdained all homage at her feet, that of the noblest, that of the most illustrious, she who held so high her lofty heart, had she abandoned it to a man who was nothing, to a son of the people?

Tears of pride burned in her eyes. And in the tumult of her ideas a prophetic word of old Rosen sounded again, quite low, in her ears: "The bohemia of exile. . ." Yes, exile alone with its dishonouring promiscuousness could have enabled this subaltern . . . But, as she loaded him with her contempt, her disdain, the memory of his services assailed her. What would have become of them without him? She recalled the emotion of their first meeting, and how she had felt herself live again as she listened to his cry. Since then, while the king pursued his pleasures, who had taken thought for their fate, repaired wrong-doing, defeated crime? And this unwearying devotion of day by day, so much talent, such fire and spirit, all that noble genius applied to a task of abnegation, without profit, without glory! The result? was it not the king, the little king, truly a king, of whom she was so proud, the future master of Illyria? . . Then, seized with an unconquerable rush of tenderness, of gratitude, recalling from the past that minute at the fair at Vincennes when she had leaned upon Élysée's strength, the queen again, as on that day, closed her eyes and gave herself delightfully in thought to that grand devoted heart that seemed to beat beside her.

Suddenly a shot rang out which startled the birds in the foliage; and a great cry, one of those piercing child-cries that mothers hear in dreams on troubled, anxious nights, a terrible appeal of anguish, darkened the sky, enlarged, transformed the garden to the measure of some vast sorrow. Hur-

ried steps were heard in the paths; the voice of the tutor, hoarse, changed, called from the target. Frederica was there at a bound.

It stood in a green dusk of hornbeam at a corner of the park carpeted with hops and gourds and rather rank grass. Boards were hanging on a trellis pierced with little holes in regular lines. She saw her child on the ground, on his back, motionless, his face white, but red around the right eye, wounded and closed, from which a few drops of blood were falling, like tears. Élysée, on his knees beside him, was wringing his arms and crying: "I did it. . . I did it! . ." He was passing; Monseigneur asked him to try his gun, and, by some awful fatality, the bullet, ricochetting on the iron of the trellis . . . . But the queen was not listening to him. Without a cry, without a groan, wholly absorbed in the mother's instinct, the saving instinct, she caught up the child and carried him in her gown to the nearest fountain; then, repelling with a gesture the servants of the household, who were hurrying to help her, she rested on the stone coping the knee on which the little body lay, and dipped that pale, adored face beneath the rippling water, letting it flow across the livid eyelid and that sinister red stain, which the water washed away, while there filtered still a thin line, redder and redder, between the lids. She did not speak, she did not even think. In her muslin dress, stained and soaked, clinging to her body like the drapery of a marble naiad, she bent above her little one and watched.

What a moment! what suspense! Little by little revived by the immersion, the wounded child first quivered, and stretched his limbs as if awaking; then suddenly he moaned.

"He lives!" she said with a delirious cry.

Lifting her head, she saw Méraut before her, his pallor, his despair seeming to ask pardon. The memory of what had passed through her mind on that bench came back to her, mingled with the terrible shock of the catastrophe, and her weakness so rapidly chastised upon her child. A fury seized her against that man, against herself. . .

"Begone! . . begone! . . Let me never see you more . . ." she cried to him, with a dreadful look. It was her love that, to punish herself, to cure herself, she thus flung as an insult into his face.

XVI.

THE DARK ROOM.

"THERE was, once upon a time, in the country of Oldenburg, a lady Countess of Ponikau, to whom the dwarfs had given, on the day of her wedding, three little loaves of gold. . ."

It is Mme. de Silvis who is relating this tale, in the obscurity of a dark room, the windows hermetically closed, the curtains hanging to the floor. The little king is lying on his bed; the queen beside him, like a phantom, is applying ice upon his forehead covered with a bandage, ice which she has renewed every two minutes, night and day, for a whole long week. How did she live without sleep, almost without food, seated by that narrow pillow, her hands holding those of her son in the intervals of applying the ice, passing from its coolness to the fever she watched and dreaded in the pulse of that feeble life?

The little king wanted his mother there, there, always there. This darkness of the great room was peopled to him with dangerous shadows, terrifying apparitions. And the impossibility of reading, of touching a single plaything, held him in a torpor which alarmed Frederica.

"Do you feel pain?" she asked him constantly.

"No . . I feel so dull . . ." the child would answer in a weary voice; and it was to drive away this dulness, to people the sad precincts of the chamber with brilliant visions, that Mme. de Silvis reopened her budget of fantastic fable, full of old German castles, imps and gnomes dancing on the floor of a dungeon, where the princess is expecting a blue bird and spinning her glass threads.

Listening to these interminable tales, the queen felt despair in her heart. It seemed to her that the work she had accomplished with so much pains was being undone, and that she was witnessing the destruction, stone by stone, of a lofty triumphal column. It was that which she saw in the darkness before her, during those long hours of seclusion, far more preoccupied by the thought that her child had fallen back into the hands of women, into the feebleness of the little Zara, than by the wound itself, the true gravity of which she did not yet know. When the doctor, lamp in hand, put aside for a moment the accumulated shades and raised the bandage, trying to revive the sensitiveness of the injured eye by a drop of atropine, the mother was comforted because the little patient did not cry or try to defend himself with his arms. No one dared to tell her that such insensibility, such stillness of the nerves showed, on the contrary, the death of the organ. The ball, in ricochetting, although it had spent its force, had struck and loosened the retina. The right eye was irrevocably gone. All the precautions taken were solely to save the other, threatened by that organic

affinity which makes our sight a single tool with a double handle. Ah! when the queen should know the extent of her misfortune! — she who so firmly believed that, thanks to her care, to her vigilant tenderness, the accident would leave no trace, — she who was already talking to the child of going out!

"Leopold, shall you not be glad to have a beautiful drive in the forest?"

Yes, Leopold would be very glad. He wished they would take him where they did before, to that fête, where he went with his mother and tutor. Then suddenly interrupting himself, —

"Where is he, M. Élysée? Why does he never come here?"

They told him that his master was on a journey. That explanation satisfied him. To think fatigued him; so did speaking. He dropped back into his dull indifference; returning to the hazy regions evoked by invalids, whose dreams are mingled with the scene around them and the fixed appearances of things, the movement and sound of which their nurses fear. People came in and went out; whispers crossed each other and discreet steps; but the queen heard nothing, solely occupied in applying that ice. Sometimes Christian would push open the door, always ajar on account of the heat of the closed room, and come in to say, in a voice that he strove to render joyous and careless, some pleasant drollery to make the boy laugh or talk. But his voice sounded false in presence of the catastrophe, and the father intimidated the child. That little sunken memory, which the shot had filled with the

cloud of its smoke, retained a few impressions of past scenes, the anxious waitings of his mother, her revolt that night when she almost dragged him to a fall of three storeys. He answered his father in a low voice, his teeth closed. Then Christian would address his wife: "You ought to rest, Frederica, you will kill yourself... For the child's sake, even..." Urgent, imploring, the hand of the little prince would clasp that of his mother, which reassured him in the same mute, eloquent manner: "No, no, do not be afraid... I will not leave you..." She exchanged a few words coldly with her husband and left him to his gloomy thoughts.

The accident to his son completed for Christian a true series of black disasters. He felt himself alone in the world, stunned, despairing. Ah! if his wife would only take him back... He felt the need of all weak natures to draw near to some one, to lay his head upon a friendly bosom, and comfort himself with tears, confessions; after which he could return with a lighter heart to new enjoyments and fresh betrayals. But Frederica's heart is forever lost to him; and now the child also turns away from his caresses. He told himself all this, standing at the foot of the bed in the dimness of that dark room, while the queen, attentive to the minutes, took the ice from the bowl, applied it to the moistened bandage, lifting and kissing the little forehead to feel the heat of it, and while Mme. de Silvis related gravely the story of the three little loaves of gold to the legitimate sovereign of the kingdoms of Illyria and Dalmatia.

Christian left the room, his exit as little noticed as his entrance, and wandered sadly through the silent, well-ordered house which old Rosen kept up in all its customary ceremonial, he himself coming and going from the mansion to the offices, his figure stiff, but his head shaking. The hot-houses, the garden continued to bloom; the ouistitis, reviving in the balmier weather, filled their cages with cries and skips. The prince's pony, led out daily by the groom, made his rounds of the courtyard, littered now in straw, and stopping before the portico turned his nut-brown eyes to the steps down which the little king was wont to come to him. The aspect of the house is always elegant and comfortable; but every one expects, awaits; suspense is in the ambient air, and a silence like that which follows a great thunder-clap. The most marked circumstance is the sight of those three blinds hermetically closed while all the rest are open to the light and air, shrouding that mystery of sorrow and of pain.

Méraut, who, though driven from the royal house, is lodging near it and roams incessantly around it, Méraut gazes despairingly at those closed windows. He returns each day in terror lest he find them open, the smoke of an extinguished taper exhaling from them. The inhabitants of that section of Saint-Mandé are beginning to recognize him. The seller of cakes stops the rattle of her castanets when the tall fellow with the mournful air goes by; the players at bowls and the guard at the railway station imprisoned in his little wooden

box, think him crazy; and indeed his despair is turning into mania. The queen did right to drive him away; he deserved it; and his passion disappeared before the great destruction of his hopes. To have dreamed of making a king, to have given himself that splendid task, and then to have destroyed, annihilated all with his own hands! The father and mother, more cruelly struck in their affections, were not more despairing than he. He had not even the consolation of giving assistance, watchfulness at all hours; scarcely could he get any news of what was happening; the servants treating him with a black rancour as the cause of the disaster. Sometimes, however, a forest watchman, who had access to the house, brought him the news of the servant's hall, exaggerated by that craving for the worst which characterizes the populace. Now the little king was blind; then his brain was attacked and weakened; the queen was declared to be letting herself die of hunger; and the unhappy Élysée lived a whole day on these dreadful rumours, wandering in the forest as long as his legs could carry him, then returning to watch at the edge of the wood in the tall, flowery grass, trampled of a Sunday by the holiday-makers, but deserted of a week-day, a truly rural bit of ground.

Once, towards evening, he was lying at full length in the cool grass, his eyes fixed upon the house, from which the light through the interlacing branches was fading. The players at bowls were departing, the forest watchmen were beginning their nightly rounds, the swallows were navigating

in great circles above the tallest shrubs in pursuit of gnats, which were dropping down with the setting sun. The time of day was melancholy. Élysée sank into its sadness, weary in mind as in body, letting his memories, his anxieties, speak within him, as often happens amid these silences of nature in which our inward struggles seem to make themselves heard. Suddenly, his glance, which was seeking nothing, fell upon the ambling, unsteady gait, the quaker hat, the white waistcoat, and the gaiters of Boscovich. M. le conseiller was walking rapidly, holding cautiously in his hand some object that was wrapped in his handkerchief. He did not seem surprised to see Élysée, and came up to him as if nothing had happened, saying in the easiest and most natural tone in the world: —

"My dear Méraut, you see before you a most happy man."

"Ah! my God! What? . . Is Monseigneur's condition . . ."

The botanist assumed at once the proper air of grief with which to answer that Monseigneur continued just the same, — always kept quiet, the room darkened; painful uncertainty, oh! yes, very painful. . . Then abruptly: "Guess what I have here. . . Take care, it is very fragile. . . You are loosening some of the earth. . . A root of clematis . . . but not the common clematis of your gardens . . . *Clematis Dalmatica* . . . a dwarf species, quite peculiar, only found among us, down there. . . I doubted at first, I hesitated; I have been watching it since last spring. . . And

now see, stalk, corollas . . . and that fragrance of peeled almonds. . ."

Unfolding his handkerchief with infinite precautions, he revealed a frail, contorted plant, with a milk-white flower and pale-green leaves that seemed blending together. Méraut tried to question him, but the monomaniac was wholly absorbed in his passion, his discovery. It certainly was a very strange fact that this little plant should, alone of its race, have grown there, six hundred leagues from its native home. Flowers have their history, and also their romances; and here was a probable romance which the good man repeated to himself, believing that he told it to Méraut.

"By what caprice of the soil, by what geological mystery can this little travelling seed have been brought to germinate at the foot of an oak in Saint-Mandé? Such cases do sometimes appear. A botanist of my acquaintance found a Lapland flower in the Pyrenees. It must happen through currents of atmosphere, and threads of the soil wandering from place to place. . . But the miracle here is, that this scrap of a plant has germinated precisely in the neighbourhood of its regal compatriots, exiles themselves. . . See how vigorous it is . . . a trifle paler perhaps through exile, but all its tendrils out, prepared to climb. . ."

He stood there, in the setting sunlight, clematis in hand, motionless in happy contemplation. Then suddenly he cried out: —

"The devil! it is getting late . . . I must go in . . . Adieu."

"I am coming with you," said Élysée.

Boscovich stopped, stupefied. He had been present at the scene, and knew the manner in which the tutor had been dismissed, attributing his dismissal solely to the accident. . . What would be thought of his return? What would the queen say?

"No one will see me, Monsieur le conseiller. . . You must take me in by the avenue, and I will slip furtively to the door of the room. . ."

"What! you wish . . ."

"To go near to Monseigneur, to hear him speak for a moment, without his knowing I am there. . ."

The feeble Boscovich exclaimed, objected, but he walked on all the same, driven by the will of the stronger man, who followed him without paying the least heed to his protestations.

Oh! what emotion when the little gate on the avenue turned amid its ivy and Méraut found himself once more at the very spot in the garden where his life was blasted.

"Wait for me," said Boscovich, trembling all over; "I will come and tell you when the servants are at dinner. . . In that way you will meet no one on the staircase. . ."

No one had come to the shooting-ground since that fatal day. In the crushed flower-borders, in the gravel torn up by frantic steps, the scene was still visible. The same boards with shot-holes hung to the trellises, the water flowing from the fountain as from a spring of tears, all things were

gray in the gloom of the twilight; it seemed to Élysée as though again he heard the queen's voice saying: "Begone! . . begone! . ." in tones which gave him now, as he listened to them in memory, the sensation of a wound and a caress.

Boscovich returned, and together they glided past the trees to the house. In the glass gallery opening on the garden which served as the schoolroom, the books were on the table, the two chairs stood ready for master and pupil, awaiting the next lesson with the cruel inertia of Things. It was agonizing; and so was the silence of these places, where the child, singing, running, making his little orbit a dozen times a day with songs and laughter, was missing.

From the brilliantly lighted staircase, Boscovich, who walked in front, took him into the room that preceded that of the king, also kept dark to prevent the slightest ray of light from entering the room beyond. A night-lamp alone burned in an alcove, where, too, were phials and potions.

"The queen and Mme. de Silvis are with him. . . Be sure you do not speak. . . And come away quickly. . ."

Élysée heard no more; his foot was on the threshold, his heart beating and striving to command itself. The heavy shadows at first prevented his unaccustomed eyes from distinguishing anything; but he heard, coming as it were from a depth, a childish voice reciting in a sort of singsong, its evening prayers, — a voice scarcely to be recognized as that of the little king, so weary,

gloomy, dull, it was. Stopping short, after one of the numerous "amens," the child said: —

"Mother, must I say the king's prayer?"

"Why, yes, my darling," replied the beautiful grave voice, the cadence of which had also changed, wavering a little in its fall, like a metal worn by a corrosive water falling drop by drop.

The king hesitated.

"I thought . . . It seemed to me that now it was not worth while. . ."

"Why not?" the queen asked quickly.

"Oh!" said the child-king, in an elderly, reflective tone, "I think I have many other things to ask of God than those in that prayer. . ." Then correcting himself, from the impulse of his good little nature, he added: "In a minute, mamma, in a minute; as you wish it. . ."

And slowly he began in a tremulous, resigned voice: —

"O Lord! who art my God; thou hast placed upon the throne thy servant; but I am a child, who knows not how to act, though I am trusted with the people thou hast chosen. . ."

A smothered sob was heard at the farther end of the room. The queen quivered.

"Who is there? . . Is that you, Christian?" she added, as the door closed hastily.

At the end of a week the doctor declared that he would not condemn the little patient to the torture of a dark room any longer, and that it was now time to let him have a little light.

"Already!" said Frederica; "they assured me it would last at least a month."

The physician was unable to tell her that, the eye being dead, completely dead, without hope of recovery, the imprisonment was useless. He evaded the truth by vague phrases, of which the pity of such men have the secret. The queen did not understand him, and no one about her had the strength to enlighten her. They waited for Père Alphée; religion having the right of way to all wounds even to those she cannot cure. With his natural brutality, his roughness of tone, the monk, who used the word of God as a club, delivered the frightful blow which brought down every pride in the breast of Frederica. The mother had suffered on the day of the accident, struck on all her tenderest fibres by the cries, the swoon, the blood of her little one. This second shock fell more directly on the queen. Her son maimed, disfigured! She, who wanted him so beautiful for the triumph! Must she take to the Illyrians this poor infirm child? Frederica never forgave the physician for having deceived her. Thus, even in exile, kings are always victims to their grandeur and to human cowardice.

At first, in order to avoid too sudden a transition from darkness to light, green serge curtains were drawn across the panes; but when, finally, all the windows were frankly opened and the actors in this sad drama were able to look at one another by daylight, it was only to perceive the changes that had taken place during that seclusion. Frederica

had grown old; she had changed the fashion of her hair to hide the whitening locks about the temples. The little prince, quite wan, wore a bandage over his eye, and all his little face, puckered with grimaces and precocious wrinkles, seemed to feel the burden of that bandage. What a new life for him, this maimed existence! At table he had to learn to eat; his spoon and fork, misguided, struck his forehead or his ear with that curious awkwardness of one lost sense upsetting all the others. He laughed his little laugh of a sickly child, and the mother turned aside as she heard it to hide her tears. As soon as he could go into the garden other distresses came. He tottered, stumbled at every step, took sideways for straight before him; or else, fearful of everything, he shrank at the slightest obstacle, clinging to the hands and the skirts of his mother, and turning each well-known corner of the park as if an ambush lay behind it. The queen endeavoured to arouse at least his mind; but the shock had no doubt been too great; it seemed as if with the visual ray, a ray of intellect had also been extinguished. He fully understood, poor little boy, the grief his condition caused his mother; in speaking to her he made an effort to raise his head and give her a timid, one-sided glance as if to ask pardon for his weakness. But he could not conquer certain physical and unreasonable terrors. The sound of a shot at the edge of the wood, the first he had heard since the accident, caused him almost a fit of epilepsy. The first time also that they spoke

to him of mounting his pony, his whole body trembled.

"No . . . no . . . I beg of you," he said, pressing close to Frederica. . . "Take me in the landau . . . I am afraid. . ."

"Afraid of what?"

"I am afraid . . . I am so afraid. . ."

Neither arguments nor entreaties availed.

"Well, then," commanded the queen, in a tone of inward anger, "bring the landau."

This was on a fine Sunday at the close of autumn, recalling that Sunday in May when they had gone to the fair at Vincennes. Unlike her feelings on that day, Frederica was now annoyed by the common crowd that filled the walks and lawns. This gayety in the open air, this smell of their provisions on the grass sickened her. Now she saw poverty and sadness in all those groups, despite their laughter and their Sunday clothes. The child, trying to smooth that beautiful face, whose expression of disenchantment he attributed to himself, clung to his mother with passionate and timid caresses.

"Are you angry with me, mamma, because I would not take the pony?"

No; she was not angry. But how would it be on the day of his coronation, when his subjects recalled him? A king must know how to ride on horseback.

The wrinkled little head turned to gaze at the queen with its solitary eye.

"Do you really think, really, that they will want me still, as I am now?"

He looked indeed so frail, so old. But Frederica, indignant at the doubt, told him of the king of Westphalia who was quite blind, of both eyes.

"Oh! a sham king, he! They turned him out."

Then she told him the tale of John of Bohemia at the battle of Crécy, requesting his knights to lead him forward far enough to deal blows with his sword, and so far did they lead him that they were all found dead the next day, their bodies stretched out, they and their horses in a mass together.

"That was terrible . . . terrible!" replied Leopold.

And he sat there, shuddering, lost in that heroic history as in the fairy tales of Mme. de Silvis; so small, so puny, so little a king! At that moment the carriage left the borders of the lake to enter a narrow roadway where there was room for scarcely more than the wheels. Some one stepped hastily aside, a man whom the child, impeded by his bandage, could not see, but whom the queen knew instantly. Gravely, with a hard look, she showed him by a motion of her head the poor maimed boy, cowering in the folds of her gown, their masterpiece destroyed, the wreck, the relic of a once great race. It was their last meeting; and Méraut left Saint-Mandé forever.

XVII.

FIDES, SPES.

THE Duc de Rosen entered first.

"It is rather damp," he said gravely. "The rooms have not been opened since the death of my son."

And in truth a great chill, like that of a sepulchral cave, filled the splendid suite of apartments, where the guzlas had so proudly sounded, and where all remained as it was on the night of the ball. The two carved chairs of the king and queen, close to the gallery of the musicians, still presided. Arm-chairs in a circle marked an aristocratic "aside" of the greater personages. Ribbons, fragments of flowers, atoms of gauze, a sort of dust of the dance, lay scattered on the floor. Evidently, the decorators had rapidly pulled down the hangings, the garlands of foliage, in haste to close doors and windows on those salons which told of festal joy in that house of mourning. The same abandonment was visible in the garden, heaped with dead leaves, over which a whole winter had passed and then a spring without cultivation, so that a wealth of wild vegetation had now invaded it. By one of those strange whims of sorrow which desires that all about it shall suffer and be

barren, the duke had not allowed a single touch to be given to the grounds, nor had he entered even once his magnificent apartments.

After the affair of Gravosa, as Colette, very delicate since the birth of her child, had gone to Nice with the little W to recruit her health, the duke renounced his nightly returns to the Île Saint-Louis, and ordered a bed put up for him in the administration building at Saint-Mandé. Evidently, he would sooner or later sell the great mansion; and he now began to part with the sumptuous antiquities that filled it. This was why the Venetian mirrors that went to sleep reflecting the amorous couples of Hungarian mazurkas, the sparkling of eyes and lustres, were now, in the gray, cold light of a Parisian day, giving back the uncouth silhouettes, the greedy lips of Père Leemans and the Sieur Pichery, his acolyte, — livid he, with his hooked moustache, stiff with cosmetics.

It needed all Père Leemans' life-long habits, his experience in bargaining and in those comedies which bring into play every facial grimace of humanity, to prevent the old man from uttering a cry of joy and admiration when the duke's servant, as old and erect as himself, opened and threw back noisily the outer blinds against the wall of the house, and he could see, shimmering discreetly and blending their splendid tones of wood and bronze and ivory, the precious treasures of a collection, not ticketed and cared for like those of Mme. de Spalato but of a more superb luxury, more barbarous, more novel. And without a dent, without

a defacement! . . Old Rosen had not pillaged ignorantly, as the generals who rush through a summer palace like a waterspout, carrying off with equal ardour rubbish and treasures. Nothing here but choice marvels. It was curious to watch the pauses of the old dealer, his snout projecting through his beard, fixing his magnifier, scratching the enamels gently, ringing the bronzes, all with an air of indifference, even contempt; while from head to foot, from the tips of his nails to the hair of his beard his whole being quivered and sparkled as if he had been put into contact with an electric current. Pichery was likewise not less amusing to observe. Having no notion whatever of art, no personal taste, he formed his impressions on those of his partner, assuming the same contemptuous air, quickly changed, however, into stupefaction when Leemans said to him in a low voice about some treasure, as he bent over a little book in which he never stopped taking notes: "Worth a hundred thousand francs, if a sou. . ." Here was a rare, unique opportunity to recoup themselves for their losses on the "Grand Stroke," by which they had allowed themselves to be so supremely fooled. But they had to be cautious how they behaved; for the old general of pandours, as distrustful and impenetrable as the whole "brocante" trade put together, followed them step by step, planted himself behind them, and was not in the least the dupe of their grimaces.

Proceeding thus they came at last, at the end of the reception salons, to a little room raised two

steps above the others, delightfully decorated in Moorish style with low divans, rugs, and authentic cabinets.

"Is this included?" asked Leemans.

The general hesitated imperceptibly for a moment before replying. It was Colette's haven in that vast mansion, her favourite boudoir, in which she took refuge at her rare leisure moments and wrote her correspondence... The thought came to him to reserve this Moorish furniture which she liked... but no, he would stop at nothing; all must be sold.

"Yes, this is included," he said coldly.

Leemans, attracted at once by the rarity of a piece of Arabian furniture, carved and gilded, with arcades and miniature galleries, began to examine the multifarious drawers, some secret, opening one into the other by hidden springs, slender, delicate little drawers exhaling the orange and sandal-wood of their satiny linings. Putting his hand into one of them he felt something rustle.

"Here are papers," he said.

The inventory taken and the two dealers ushered out, the duke bethought him of the papers forgotten and left behind in the drawer. Sure enough, a whole packet of letters, tied with a crumpled ribbon and redolent of the subdued fragrance of the drawer. He looked at it mechanically, and recognized the handwriting, Christian's large, straggling, fantastic writing, which for many months had reached him on notes and drafts requiring money. No doubt these were letters from the king to Her-

bert. But no: "Colette, my dear love. . ." With a brusque gesture he pulled off the ribbon and scattered the bundle on a divan, some thirty notes, giving rendezvous, thanks, bestowing gifts, — in short the whole adulterous correspondence in all its melancholy commonplace; ending with excuses for missing assignations, missives growing colder and colder, like the last floaters at the tail of a kite. In nearly all there was some reference to an annoying and persecuting personage whom Christian scoffingly called: the "Demon of Ill-luck," or simply: "D. of Ill-luck," on whom the duke was trying to put a name, when at the end of one of those satirical pages — far more licentious than sentimental — he suddenly saw his own image, his own little pointed head on his long stilted legs. It was he himself, his wrinkles, his eagle beak, his blinking eyes; and beneath, to leave no manner of doubt, was written: "Demon of Ill-luck mounting guard on the Quai d'Orsay."

The first surprise over, the outrage fully comprehended in all its baseness, the old man uttered: "Oh!" and stopped, confounded and ashamed.

That his son had been betrayed did not surprise him; he had known it all along. But by Christian! to whom they had sacrificed all, for whom Herbert died at twenty-eight, and for whom he himself was now in the act of ruining his property and selling everything, even to his trophies of victory, that the king's signature might not be protested. . . Ah! if he could only avenge himself! if he could only unhook from those panoplies two

weapons, no matter which... But — it was the king! satisfaction cannot be asked of kings. And suddenly the magic of that consecrated word appeased his anger; and he ended by telling himself that, after all, Monseigneur trifling with that young woman was not so guilty as he, Duc de Rosen, in marrying his son for money to that little Sauvadon. He bore the penalty of his own cupidity... These reflections scarcely lasted a minute. The letters safely under lock and key, he left the house, returning to his post at Saint-Mandé, to the desk in his office where piles of bills and documents awaited him, among which he noticed more than once the big and straggling writing of those love-letters; and Christian, as he passed through the courtyard and saw behind the window, erect, devoted, vigilant, the long outline of the Demon of Ill-luck, never once supposed that he was well-informed of everything.

None but kings with all the national and superstitious traditions attaching to their persons, can inspire such devotions as these, but they inspire them even though they themselves be completely unworthy. This king, now that the boy was out of danger, "made fête" with greater vehemence than ever. At first, he endeavoured to return to Séphora. Yes, even after he had been so brutally and cynically dismissed; after he had had the proof, and every proof of her treachery, he still loved her enough to rush to her feet at the slightest sign. She was now in all the joy of a renewed honeymoon. Cured of her ambitions, restored to her

tranquil nature, from which the bait of millions had drawn her, Séphora would have preferred to sell the house in the Avenue de Messine, realize its value, live at Courbevoie with J. Tom, like a pair of rich retired merchants, and crush the Sprichts with their comfort. J. Tom Levis, on the contrary, dreamed of new strokes; and the grandiose surroundings in which his wife was installed gave him, little by little, the idea of another Agency, in a more luxurious, more fashionable form; a gloved traffic, doing business amid the flowers and music of fêtes, around the lake, on the long scent, replacing the played-out cab (now numbered and relegated to a street-cab company) with a gorgeous *calèche* and liveries, bearing the arms of Madame la comtesse. He had not much difficulty in convincing Séphora, with whom he now definitively lived; and the salons of the Avenue de Messine were lighted up for a series of dinners and balls, the invitations for which were sent out in the name of the Comte and Comtesse de Spalato. At first the company was rather sparse. Then the feminine element, rebellious in the beginning, took to treating J. Tom Levis and wife as rich foreign personages coming from a great distance, whose luxury made their exoticism correct. All the young Gomme crowded around Séphora, now much the fashion through her adventures, and M. le Comte, as soon as the winter season had fairly begun, had several very good affairs on hand.

They could not, of course, refuse to Christian an entrance into salons that had cost him so dear.

Besides, the title of king made the house noted and guaranteed it. So he went there, basely, with the vague hope of a return to the heart of his mistress, not indeed by the grand portico, but by some back-stairs entrance. But after trying for a time this rôle of dupe or victim, and showing himself weekly, as white in face as in linen, in those gilded salons, where the glaring eyes of Tom Levis watched and pinned him, he grew discouraged, came no more, and went among prostitutes, to divert his mind. Like all men in search of a type once lost, he wandered everywhere and fell low, very low, guided by Lebeau, well used to all forms of Parisian vice, who often brought his master's valise of a morning to strange lairs. A low downfall, becoming easier day by day to the flaccid soul of that voluptuary, whose sad, calm home was not of a kind to keep him from it. There was little amusement at Saint-Mandé now that Méraut and the princess were no longer there. Leopold V. was slowly recovering, confided, for the period of convalescence to Mme. Éléonore de Silvis, who at last was able to apply the precepts of the Abbé Diguet on the six methods of knowing men, and the seven means of avoiding flattery; lessons hindered by the bandage round the head of the little patient, and presided over, as before, by the queen, with many an agonized glance at her *Clematis Dalmatica*, the little flower of exile now in process of etiolation before her eyes. For some time past the Franciscans had been in search of a tutor; but an Élysée Méraut is not easy to find among the

youth of these times. Père Alphée had his own ideas on the subject, which he kept himself from uttering, because the queen would not allow even the name of the former tutor to be spoken before her. Once only, under special circumstances, did the monk dare to speak of his friend.

"Madame, Élysée Méraut is about to die," he said to abruptly her as they left the table one day after grace.

During all the time of his stay at Saint-Mandé Méraut had kept his chamber in the Rue Monsieur-le-Prince from a sort of superstition, like that which induces us to keep on the shelf of a closet some old-fashioned garment of our youth which we shall never again put on. He never went there, letting forgetfulness and dust heap itself on the papers, the books, the mystery of that silent retreat amid the noisy life of the lodging-house. But one day he returned to it, aged, weary, his hair almost white. The stout landlady, roused from her torpor by hearing some one fumbling among the keys hanging to their nails, had difficulty in recognizing her lodger.

"Why, what tricks have you been playing with yourself, my poor Monsieur Méraut?" she cried. "It is n't right to ruin your health in that way."

"True, I am rather battered. . ." replied Élysée, smiling; and he mounted the five stories, round-shouldered, stooping, crushed. The room was just the same, with the melancholy outlook from its dusty windows — over square monastic roofs, the

École de Médicine, the Amphitheatre; cold, irresponsive buildings exhaling the sadness of their purpose; and on the right, toward the Rue Racine, the two great tanks of the city water, shining in their reservoirs and reflecting the wan sky and the smoking chimneys. Nothing was changed; but in him there was no longer that glorious ardour of youth which colours and warms all about it, rising enthusiastic amid difficulties and gloom. He tried to settle himself to read, to shake the dust from work he had left unfinished. Between his thoughts and the page before him glided that reproachful glance of the queen, and at the other end of the table he fancied he saw his pupil, awaiting his lesson and listening to him. He felt himself too heart-broken, too desolate, and hurriedly he went down again and put back his key on its nail.

Thenceforth, he was seen as before, a tall, loose-jointed figure with his hat on the back of his head, a package of books or reviews under his arm, wandering through the Quarter, under the arcades of the Odéon, or along the Quai Voltaire; bending over the odour of new editions, or the coarse piles of refuse literature; reading in the street, in the alleys of the Luxembourg, or gesticulating as he leaned of a cold winter's day against some statue in the garden and stared at a frozen fountain. In this atmosphere of study and of intelligent youth, which no march of improvement has been able to demolish or to drive altogether away, he recovered something of his inspiration and his fire. But no longer did he have the same auditors, for the flood

of students is ever changing and renewing itself in this Quarter of birds of passage. The places of meeting were also changed; the political cafés were deserted now for those breweries where the waiting is done by girls in costumes, Swiss, Italian, Swedish, draped by some artist in vogue, and decked in jaunty tinsel. Of Élysée's former rivals, the fine orators of his day, Pesquidoux of the "Voltaire" and Larminat of the "Procope," nothing remained except a vague recollection in the memory of the waiters, like that of actors gone from the footlights. Some had mounted high, very high, to power, to public life; and occasionally when Élysée was wandering along the shop-fronts, reading, his hair flying in the wind, from a passing carriage some noted personage of the Chamber or the Senate would call to him: "Méraut! Méraut!" They talked together... "What have you been doing?.. are you working at anything?.." And Méraut, his forehead wrinkling, would speak vaguely of a great enterprise "which had not succeeded." Never a word more. They tried to drag him forth, to utilize those lost powers. But no, he was faithful to his monarchical ideas and his hatred to the Revolution. He asked nothing; he needed no one; nearly all the money he had earned in his post remained to him, so that he did not even seek for pupils. He shut himself up in a disdainful sorrow, too great, too deep to be understood by others, and wholly without distraction — beyond a few visits to the convent of the Franciscans, not merely to obtain news of Saint-Mandé, but be-

cause he loved the fantastic chapel with its cave of Jerusalem and the coloured, bleeding Jesus. That artless mythology, those almost pagan representations, were the joy of Christians in the earlier centuries. "Philosophers have placed God too high," he said sometimes. "We cannot see him any longer." But he, he saw Him in the twilight of that crypt, where amid the images of barbarous punishment, beside the Marguerite d'Ossuna flagellating the marble of her shoulders, he beheld again that vision of a Christmas night, a queen, her arms extended, imploring yet protecting, folded with clasped hands around her son, before the manger. . .

One night Élysée was awakened with a start, by a singular sensation of heat rising in his breast slowly as if by a surge; and without pain, without shock, but with a sense of final annihilation, his mouth was filled with a sickening mass of blood. It was mysterious and sinister, — disease coming suddenly like an assassin who opens the doors without noise in the darkness. He was not alarmed, and merely consulted some medical students at the place where he dined. They told him he was very ill. "What is it?" "Everything," they answered. He had reached the climacteric forty years of bohemia, where infirmity lies in wait, watching for man and making him pay dear for the excesses or the privations of his youth; terrible age; above all, when the moral spring is broken, when the will to live is gone.

Élysée continued to lead the same existence;

always out of doors, in the rain, in the wind; passing from overheated rooms, stifling with gas, to the cold of the streets in winter, continuing to ramble along the sidewalks when the cafés were closed for the greater part of the night. The hæmoptyses became more frequent, frightful lassitude succeeding them. In order not to stay in bed, for the desolate melancholy of his chamber weighed upon him, he installed himself in the "Rialto," a brewery close to the lodging-house, where he read the newspapers and dreamed in a corner. The place was quiet until evening, gay with its light oak furniture, and its walls daubed with frescos, representing Venice, its bridges, its cupolas in vistas on a rainbow sky. Venetian girls themselves, lively enough when evening came and they flitted about with their leather pouches between the tables, their coral necklaces reflected in the beer-glasses, slept by day with their heads on their arms, crumpling their lace caps and the puffs of their muslin sleeves; or else were employed beside the stove in needle-work, which at times they laid aside to drink at a table with a stray student. One of them, a tall strong girl, with fine, thick, tawny hair rolled high, and grave, slow movements, would pause now and then at her embroidery to listen... At this one Méraut gazed for hours, until she spoke to him; and then the rough and vulgar voice put his dream to flight.

Soon, however, his strength failed him for even these quiet sittings behind the curtain of the brewery. He could no longer come down the

stairs, and was forced to stay in bed, surrounded by books and newspapers; leaving his door ajar that the life and rumble of the house might reach him. He was not allowed to talk. It was then that he resigned himself to write; he resumed his book, his famous book on monarchy, and continued it feverishly with a trembling hand, shaken by a cough that scattered the pages on his bed. He now feared but one thing: to die before he finished it; to go as he had lived, hidden, unknown, unuttered.

Sauvadon, the Bercy uncle, whose enormous, turbulent vanity suffered in seeing his master in this miserable lodging, came often to visit him. Directly after the catastrophe he had rushed, purse open, to obtain, as before, "ideas about things." "Uncle, I have no more," replied Méraut, despondently. And then, to draw him from his apathy, old Sauvadon talked of sending him to the South, to Nice, to share in the sumptuous establishment of Colette and her little W.

"It won't cost me any more," he said naïvely, "and you 'll get cured."

But Élysée did not care to be cured; he wanted to finish his book in the place of its birth, among those deep Parisian rumblings, where each man hears the dominating sound that suits him. Even while he wrote, Sauvadon, sitting at the foot of the bed, would gossip about his pretty niece and work himself into a rage against that old idiot of a general who was selling his house on the Île Saint-Louis.

"I ask you now what he can do with all that money. He must heap it in holes, in hiding-places... But after all, that 's his affair... Colette is rich enough to do without him..."

And the wine-merchant tapped his stomach, tight as a drum, on the side of his fob.

Another time, flinging on the bed a bundle of newspapers which he had brought to Élysée, he burst out with: "They say there 's something going on in Illyria... They have just sent a royalist majority to the Diet... Ah! if there was only a man there!.. But that little Leopold is still too young, and Christian is degrading himself lower and lower every day... He is frequenting all the lairs and the dance-halls with that valet of his..."

Élysée listened, shuddering from head to foot. Poor queen!.. The other continued, without perceiving the harm he was doing: —

"Fine goings-on among those exiles!.. There 's Prince d'Axel compromised in a filthy affair in the Avenue d'Antin... You know, that family hotel with its patriarchal name which serves as a refuge for emancipated girls... What a scandal! — an heir-apparent!.. One thing, however, puzzles me... At the very time the thing happened, Colette wrote me that Prince d'Axel was in Nice, and she had been to a regatta in a yacht hired for her by his Highness... Certainly there must be some mistake. And I hope there is... because, between ourselves, my dear Méraut..."

And here the old fellow confided very mysteriously to his friend that the prince-royal appeared

to be extremely assiduous to Colette; and as she was not a woman to . . . you understand . . . it might be that before long . . .

The big workman's face of the parvenu lighted up with a smile: —

"Think of that! Colette Queen of Finland! . . and Sauvadon of Bercy the uncle of a king! . . But I am tiring you."

"Yes, I want to go to sleep . . ." said Élysée, who had closed his eyes as a civil means of getting rid of the kindly, conceited old fellow.

Sauvadon gone, he gathered up his papers and tried to write, but not a word would come to him; he was seized with disgust and utter lassitude. The hideous tales had sickened him. . . Before those pages scattered on his bed, — that plea for royalty on which he was spending the little that remained to him of blood, — seeing himself, there, in that sordid chamber, with the gray hairs of an old student, so much passion spent and strength squandered, he doubted for the first time, he asked himself if indeed he had been a dupe all his life. . . A defender, an apostle? . . of kings who degraded themselves in pleasures, and deserted their own cause! . . And while his eyes roved sadly along those naked walls, where the sun only came by reflection from the roofs, he saw, in its dusty frame, the old relic, the red seal, *Fides, Spes,* which he had taken from the pillow of his dead father. All at once the noble Bourbonian face of old Méraut rose up before him, such as he had seen it, rigid on the death bed, asleep in his

confidence and his sublime fidelity, the looms stopped, the windmills on the horizon between the arid rocks of the coast and the pitiless blue of the Southern sky. It was a moment of hallucination, the Enclos de Rey, all his youth floating in a memory which was now failing. . .

Suddenly the door opened softly with a murmur of drapery and voices. He thought it was a neighbour, some kind girl of the Rialto who had brought him a drink for his fever. Quickly he closed his eyes; for sleep dismissed the unwelcome. But no; a hesitating little step came towards him on the cold brick floor of the chamber. "Bonjour, Monsieur Élysée". . . His pupil is before him, timid, a little grown, and looking with the shyness of his infirmity at the master so changed, so pale, in that poor bed. Beyond, by the door, a woman waited, erect and proud beneath her veil. She has come herself, she has climbed the five storeys of that staircase filled with the noises of debauchery, brushing with her immaculate robe the doors that bear the tickets "Alice . . . Clémence. . ." She would not let him die without seeing — once more — his little Zara; not entering herself, she sent him her forgiveness by the hand of her child. That hand, Élysée Méraut took it, and pressed it to his lips; then, turning to the apparition that he divined to be there on the threshold of his door, with his last breath, with his last effort of life and speech, he said in a low voice, and forever: "Vive le roi!"

XVIII.

THE END OF A RACE.

A ROUGH game was being played at the Tennis club. Around the immense field of beaten ground, trampled like an arena, a great netting protected with its close meshes the evolutions of six players in white jackets and fencing shoes, who were bounding, shouting, and waving their heavy rackets. The light in the amphitheatre coming from high windows, the hoarse cries, the springs, the darts of those white beings, the impassible correctness of the attendants of the hall (all Englishmen) walking with measured step around the outer gallery, might have made an onlooker believe he was at some circus during a rehearsal of gymnasts and clowns. Among the clowns, Monseigneur the Prince d'Axel, to whom the noble game of tennis had been ordered as hygienic for his coma, could be reckoned as one of the noisiest. Arriving the night before from Nice, where he had spent a month at Colette's feet, this game was his re-entrance into Parisian life, and he was sending his ball with the "haw!" of a butcher's boy and a swing of the arm that was worthy of admiration at the shambles, when they came to inform him at the height of the game that some one wanted him.

"Zut!" responded the heir presumptive, without turning his head.

The servant insisted, and whispered a name in Monseigneur's ear which calmed him and appeared to surprise him.

"Very good: beg him to wait... I'll come... as soon as I have made this stroke."

Entering one of the bathrooms opening from the gallery round the tennis-court and coquettishly hung with Japanese mattings and furnished in bamboo, he found his friend Rigolo, crouching on a divan, his head down.

"Oh! prince, such an adventure!" exclaimed the ex-king of Illyria, raising a troubled face.

He stopped short on seeing an attendant with napkins and woollen and horsehair gloves to sponge and rub down Monseigneur, who was sweating and smoking like a Mecklenburger climbing a hill. The operation over, Christian continued, his lips quite white and shuddering.

"Something has happened to me... You must have heard down in Nice of the affair in the family hotel?"..

His Highness turned his dull glance upon his friend.

"Caught?" he said.

The king nodded, turning away his pretty, irresolute eyes. Then, after a silence: —

"You can imagine the scene... The police in the middle of the night... the little girl crying, struggling with the agents... clinging to my knees, 'Monseigneur... Monseigneur... save

me!' I tried to hush her... Too late... When I gave a name, I don't know what, the commissary laughed. 'Useless,' he said, 'my men know you... You are Prince d'Axel...'"

"Very good of him!" growled the prince, his head in a basin of water... "And then?"

"Well, then, my dear fellow, I was taken so short, I was so dashed ... and other reasons that I'll tell you later... In short, I let the man think I was you, being quite convinced at the time that the affair would have no consequences... I was mistaken. They have brought it up again, and as you are likely to be summoned before the examining judge, I have come to entreat you ..."

"To go to prison in your place?.."

"Oh! things won't come to that. Only the newspapers will get hold of it, names will be given... And just at this moment ... when matters are going right in Illyria, a royalist movement started, our restoration almost certain, the scandal would have the very worst effect..."

What a pitiable air he had, that unfortunate Rigolo, awaiting the decision of his cousin d'Axel, who was silently combing his three yellow hairs before the glass. At last the prince-royal decided to answer.

"So you think that the newspapers ..." Then suddenly, in his weak, sleepy, ventriloqual voice, he cried: "Chic!.. very chic! It will put my uncle into a fury."

Being now dressed, he took his stick, planted

his hat on one ear, and said: "Come, let's go to breakfast." Arm-in-arm along the terrace of the Feuillants they proceeded to Christian's phaeton, which was waiting at the gate of the Tuileries, and both got into it, wrapped in their furs, the day being fine with a cold, rosy light, and the slender equipage started like the wind for the Café de Londres bearing the two inseparables: Rigolo, much comforted, and Queue-de-Poule less somnolent than usual, being spurred by his tennis game and the thought of the villany of which all Paris would believe him the hero.

As they drove through the Place Vendôme, always very nearly deserted at this hour, a woman of elegant appearance and young, leading a child by the hand, was standing on the sidewalk, looking up at the numbers on the houses. His Highness, who from his lofty seat was looking at all the pretty faces with the avidity of a *boulevardier* who has been fasting for a month, saw her, and quivered. "Look, look, Christian... One might almost think..." But Christian did not listen; he was busy looking after his horse, which happened to be lively that morning; and when he did turn round in the narrow carriage to look at the handsome woman, she and the child had just entered the archway of the house that stands next to the Ministry of Justice.

She walked quickly, her veil down, rather hesitating and anxious, as if uncertain of the locality; and though her mysterious manner and dark, overrich attire might make her for an instant seem

doubtful, the name she asked of the porter, the tone of deep sadness with which she uttered that name (one of the most famous in the annals of science) removed far away from her all idea of gallantry.

"Doctor Bouchereau? . . First floor, door in front of you. . . But if you have no ticket it is useless to go up."

She made no answer, but sprang up the staircase, dragging the child after her, as if afraid of being recalled. At the first floor she was told the same thing.

"If Madame has not put down her name . . ."

"I will wait," she said.

The servant, without insisting, led them across a first antechamber where persons were seated on wooden benches, and then through a second equally full; after which he opened with solemnity the door of the grand salon and shut it again the instant the mother and child had passed through, as if to say: "You wanted to wait . . . now wait."

It was a vast room, very lofty like all the first floors of the Place Vendôme, sumptuously decorated with painted ceilings and pannelled wainscots. Scattered around, and quite out of keeping with the room and with each other, were articles of furniture in garnet velvet, provincial in shape, curtains and portières of the same material, with chairs and cushions in worsted-work. The Louis XVI. lustre above an Empire round table, the clock, with mythological figures between its two candelabra, the absence of all signs of art, revealed

the modest, hard-working physician to whom his vogue has come unexpectedly and without his taking any pains to await or receive it. And what a vogue! Such as Paris alone can give when it chooses, extending to all classes, the upper and lower of social life, overflowing to the provinces, to foreign parts, to all Europe in fact; and this for the last ten years without relaxing or diminishing, and with the unanimous approbation of the medical brotherhood, who owned that for once at least success had gone to a true man of science and not to a disguised charlatan. That which had won such fame for Bouchereau, such extraordinary following, was less his marvellous skill as an operator, his admirable lessons on anatomy, his knowledge of the human being, than the light, the divination which guided him, clearer, firmer than the steel of his instruments, that genial eye of the great thinkers and poets, which does magic with science, and sees to the depths, and beyond them. He was consulted like a Pythoness, with blind, unreasoning faith. When he said: "This is nothing at all . . ." the lame walked, and the dying were cured; hence his popularity, urgent, suffocating, tyrannical, denying to the man himself the time to live, to breathe. Head of the staff of a great hospital, he made his rounds every morning, slowly, with minute care, followed by attentive students who regarded the master as a god, escorted him, and handed him their instruments—for Bouchereau never had a case with him, and borrowed from the nearest person the tool he

needed, which he regularly forgot to return. When he left the hospital he paid a few visits, but was soon back in his own study, and, often without taking time to eat, he began his consultations, which were frequently prolonged very late into the evening.

On this occasion, though it was scarcely more than midday, the salon was already full of gloomy, anxious faces, ranged in a line around the walls, or grouped near the round table; some bending over the books and the illustrated papers, scarcely turning to look at the new arrivals, each preoccupied by himself, shut up in his own ailment, absorbed in anxiety as to what doom the oracle might pronounce. It was sinister, the silence of these patients with their hollow features furrowed by pain, their languid glance burning occasionally with cruel fire. The women still retained a certain coquetry, some of them the mask of a haughty superiority to suffering; whereas the men, snatched from their work, from the physical activity of life, seemed to be more affected, more completely beaten down. Among these self-absorbed distresses the mother and her little companion formed a touching group; he so frail, so pallid, with a tiny face dull in feature and in colour, in which there was but one eye left — she motionless, as if congealed into some great and dreadful anxiety. Once, tired of waiting, the child went awkwardly, timidly, to fetch a picture from the table. Moving in his maimed way his arm struck a patient, and he received in return so surly and frowning a glance that

he returned to his seat with empty hands and sat there, motionless, his head on one side in that attitude of a roosting bird which is common to blind children.

A true suspension of life, this waiting at the door of a great physician; a hypnotism, broken only by a sigh, a cough, a skirt gathered in, a smothered moan, or the tinkle of the bell, announcing the arrival of another patient. Sometimes the newcomer, seeing the room so full, would close the door quickly; then, after a colloquy, a short dispute, would enter again, resigned to wait. With Bouchereau there was no favouritism, each had his turn; he made no exception, beyond the members of his own profession in Paris or the provinces if they brought him one of their clients. They alone had the right to send in their cards and were allowed to enter out of turn. These men could be distinguished by their familiar, authoritative air, and the vigorous step with which they trod the salon, looking at their watches and wondering, as it was past mid-day, that nothing seemed stirring in the consulting-room. People, more people, and of all kinds, from the heavy, obese banker, who had had a servant in the salon since morning keeping two chairs for him, down to the little clerk who had said to himself: "Cost what it may, I 'll consult Bouchereau." All sorts of toilets, all kinds of deportment, bonnets of ceremony and muslin caps, black, threadbare gowns beside brilliant satins; but equality was there in the eyes red with tears, the anxious brows, the terrors and the

sorrows that haunted that salon of the great physician of Paris.

Among the last comers was a peasant, fair-haired, tanned, broad of face and of build, accompanied by a small rickety being who leaned on one side upon him, on the other upon a crutch. The father is taking the most touching precautions; he bends beneath his new blouse a back already bent by labour, he unlimbers his coarse fingers to seat the child carefully. "Comfortable, so? sit easy? . . Wait till I put this cushion under you. . ." He speaks in a loud voice, not embarrassed himself, but disturbing everybody to get chairs and a stool. The child, intimidated and refined by suffering, was silent, his body drooping, his crutches between his legs. As soon as they were fairly settled the peasant began to laugh, with tears in his eyes: "Hey! here we are! . . He 's a famous one, he is! . . He 'll cure you." Then he smiled all round him on the assemblage, a smile that came into collision with the hard coldness of the faces present. The lady in black, she, too, accompanied by a child, alone looked kindly at him; and although she seemed rather proud, he talked to her, told her his history: his name was Raizou, market-gardener at Valenton; his wife was almost always ill; unfortunately, their children took after her instead of him, so vigorous and strong. The three eldest were dead of some disease they had in the bones. . . The last one seemed as if they could bring him up. . . but for some months now it had caught him in the hip,

like the others... So he had just thrown a mattress on the bottom of the carryall, and brought him to see Bouchereau.

All this was said sedately, in the slow, drawling way of the country-folk; and while his neighbour listened to him with sympathy, the two little maimed ones examined each other curiously, drawn together by a common infirmity which gave them both, the child in a blouse and woollen muffler, and the child wrapped in velvet and costly furs, a melancholy resemblance...

But a quiver ran through the room, colour flew up into pallid faces, and all heads turned to the lofty door behind which steps were heard and seats were moved. He is there; he has come. In the frame of the door, now opened brusquely, a man appears, of medium height, stocky, square-shouldered, his forehead bald, his features hard. With a glance that crosses many an anxious look, his eyes go round the salon and scrutinize those sufferings, old or recent... Then one of them passes into the room and the door closes. "He is n't good-natured," said Raizou, half aloud; and to give himself courage he began to watch the people who went before him to the consultation. A crowd they were, and hours of waiting followed, marked only by the dragging, echoing strokes of the old provincial clock surmounted by a Polyhymnia, and the rare apparitions of the doctor. Each time, however, one place was gained, and a little stir, a little life appeared in the salon; falling back almost immediately into gloom and immobility.

Since her entrance, the mother has not said a word nor raised her veil; and from her silence, perhaps from her mental prayer, something issues, something so imposing that the peasant dares no longer talk to her, and is mute himself, heaving great sighs. Once he draws from his pocket, from one of his many pockets, a little bottle, a goblet, and a biscuit in paper which he unfolds slowly, carefully, that he may give his boy "a sop." The child just moistens his lips, then he pushes away the glass and the biscuit. "No . . . no . . . I am not hungry. . ." And before that poor contorted figure, so weary, the father thinks of his three elder ones who never were hungry either. His eyes swell, his cheeks tremble at the thought, and suddenly: "Don't stir, my boy. . . I 'll just go see if the carryall is all right." Several times already has be been down to see if that carryall is still by the sidewalk, at the same place; and each time he comes back smiling, his face beaming; and he fancies that no one will see his reddened eyes, or his cheeks purple from being rubbed by those great fists to stanch his tears.

The slow, sad hours pass. In the salon, now darkening, the faces seem more pale, more nervous; they turn in supplication to the unmoved Bouchereau as he makes his appearance periodically. The man from Valenton is grieving now that their long drive home must be at night; the wife will be so anxious, the little one will surely take cold. His grief is keen, expressed aloud with

a naïveté so touching that when, after five mortal hours of waiting, the mother and child see their turn at last come round they yield it to Raizou. "Oh! thank you, madame..." His effusion of gratitude is not oppressive, for the door is open for him. Quick he lifts his child, gives him his crutch, so troubled, so agitated, that he does not see what the lady puts into the hand of the poor little cripple. "For you . . . for you..."

Oh! how long to the mother and child is that last waiting, increased by the night now falling, and the deepening apprehension that chills their hearts! At length their turn has come; they enter a vast cabinet, vast in length, lighted by one broad, high window, which opens on the Place Vendôme, and through which the daylight enters although the hour is late. Bouchereau's table is there before them, very simple, the table of a country doctor or a receiver of registrations. He sits down at it, his back to the light, which strikes full upon the new-comers, — on that woman, whose raised veil shows a young, energetic face, with a dazzling complexion and eyes that are weary with sorrowful vigils, and on the child, lowering his head as if the strong light hurt him.

"What is the matter with him?" said Bouchereau in a kindly tone, drawing the boy to him with a fatherly gesture; for beneath the hardness of his face lay an exquisite sensibility which the forty years of his profession had never blunted. Before the mother answered she made a sign to the child that sent him to the end of the room. Then in a

beautiful grave voice, with a foreign accent, she told how her son had lost his right eye by an accident a year ago. Now some trouble had appeared in the left eye, cloudiness, dazzlings, a decided alteration in the sight. To avoid complete blindness, she was advised to have the right eye removed entirely. Could that be done? Was the child in a fit state to bear it?

Bouchereau listened with attention, leaning over the arm of his chair, his small Touranian eyes fixed on that proud mouth, with the red lips, never touched by paint, which told of the pure blood in them. Then, when the mother had finished speaking, he said: —

"The operation suggested to you, madame, is done daily and without danger, unless under certain very exceptional circumstances... Once only in twenty years have I had in my practice — at Lariboisière — a poor devil who could not stand it... It is true he was an old man, a rag-picker, alcoholized and ill-fed... Here the case, of course, is not the same... Your son does not look strong, but he comes of a beautiful and healthy mamma, who has put into his veins... But we will see about it, at any rate."

He called the child, put him between his legs, and in order to distract his mind while he examined him he asked him with a kindly smile: —

"What is your name?"

"Leopold, monsieur."

"Leopold what?"

The boy looked at his mother without answering.

"The doctor kneaded and auscultated the poor body."

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"Well, Leopold, you must take off your jacket and your waistcoat. . . So that I may feel everywhere, and listen."

The child slowly and awkwardly unfastened his clothes, aided by his mother, whose hands trembled, and by the fatherly Bouchereau, more skilful than either. Oh! that poor little puny, rickety body, the shoulders sinking into narrow chest, like the wings of a bird folded before it flies, and the skin so livid that the scapulary and the medals scarcely showed upon it, or the plaster of an *ex-voto*. The mother lowered her head, almost ashamed of her work, while the doctor kneaded and auscultated the poor body, stopping now and then to ask questions.

"The father is an old man, is he not?"

"No, monsieur. . . Barely thirty-five."

"Often ill?"

"No, hardly ever."

"That will do . . . you can dress yourself, my little man."

He threw himself back in his great arm-chair, silent, pensive, while the child, after putting on his blue velvet jacket and his furs, went back to the end of the room though no one had told him to do so. He was now so accustomed to these mysteries, these whisperings about his infirmity, that he took no notice of them, did not try to understand them, and cared no longer. But the mother, what agony was in the look she gave the doctor!

"Well?"

"Madame," said Bouchereau, in a low voice, measuring every word, "it is true that your child is threatened with loss of sight. And yet . . . if he were my son I should not operate. . . Without entirely explaining to myself that little nature, I perceive strange disorders in it, a disturbance of the whole system, and, above all, a most vitiated, exhausted blood —"

"The blood of kings!" groaned Frederica, rising abruptly in a fierce revolt. Before her, suddenly, she saw, in its little coffin filled with roses, the pallid face of her first-born. Bouchereau, rising also, enlightened by those words, recognized the Queen of Illyria, whom he had never seen, for she went nowhere, but whose portraits were in everybody's album.

"Oh! madame . . . If I had known . . ."

"Do not excuse yourself," said Frederica, already more calm. "I came here to know the truth, that truth which is never told us, even in exile. . . Ah! Monsieur Bouchereau, queens are indeed unfortunate! To think that every one is urging me, persecuting me to let my child be operated on! And yet they know well that it would kill him. . . But reasons of State! . . In a month, in two weeks, less perhaps, the Diet of Illyria will send to us. . . They want to have a king to show them. . . Such as he is now, it might be done; but blind! Who would have him? . . So, at the risk of killing him, I must allow the operation! . . Reign or die. . . And I was about to make myself the accomplice of that crime. . . Poor little Zara! . . What matter

if he reign, O my God! . . let him live! let him live! . ."

Five o'clock. Daylight is fading. In the Rue de Rivoli, crowded with equipages returning from the Bois, the carriages are driven at a foot-pace, following the railings of the Tuileries gardens, which seem, as they are struck by the setting sun, to lie in long bars upon the occupants. The sky, in the direction of the Arc de Triomphe is still suffused with a ruddy boreal glow; on the other side, already a mournful violet is deepening into night the shadows. To that side rolls the heavy landau that bears the Illyrian arms. At the turning to the Rue Castiglione the queen can see once more that balcony of the hôtel des Pyramides, she remembers the illusions of her first day in Paris, singing to her as she stood there, like the music of the band as it played among the trees. What deceptions since! What struggles! Now, all is ended, ended. The race is extinct. . . A chill, as of death, falls upon her shoulders while the landau moves onward to the shadows, always to the shadows, and she does not see the tender, timid, imploring glance that the child at her side turns towards her.

"Mamma, if I am no longer a king, will you love me all the same?"

"Oh, my treasure! . ."

Passionately she presses the little hand put out to meet hers. . . Yes, the sacrifice is made. Warmed, comforted by that clasp, Frederica is a

mother only; and when the Tuileries, their ashes gilded by a departing ray, rise up before her to recall the past, she gazes at them without emotion, without memory, as though she looked upon some ancient ruin of Assyria or of Egypt, the witness of manners and of morals and of peoples vanished; a grand old dead past — gone.

SCENES AND FANCIES.

SCENES AND FANCIES.

I. The Romance of Red-Riding-Hood.
II. The Souls of Paradise.
III. The Trumpet and the Trumpeter.
IV. The Eight Mrs. Blue-Beards.
V. A Competitive Examination for Charenton.
VI. The Nightingales of the Cemetery.

THE ROMANCE OF RED-RIDING-HOOD.

THE ROMANCE OF RED-RIDING-HOOD.

PERSONAGES.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.
POLONIUS, PROFESSOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF N. . .
A MAN OF LETTERS.
TWO LOVERS.
A LUNATIC.
A CHILD.

SCENE FIRST.

A path through woods. Flowers, birds, butterflies. RED-RIDING-HOOD is wearing her traditional costume; not forgetting the cake and the pot of butter.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Oh, be joyful! there are days when one is happy to be in the world, when it seems as if one's boots had wings, and one's eyes shot flames, and one's veins were all stuffed with saltpetre — days when one wants to turn summersets on the grass, or jump into some one's arms, or skim along the tree-tops. That's just the humour I am in to-day; and, between ourselves, I have a great many days just like to-day. . . (*Skips about.*) Tra la la, la la la, la la la! Houp, la la!

POLONIUS, *entering.*

Here 's a singularly lively young person. I have seen that pretty face before, somewhere.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

What does he want with me, that old fellow?

POLONIUS.

Hey! over there! little girl! Come here and let me speak to you.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Make haste then; I 'm in a hurry.

POLONIUS.

But wait a minute. Parbleu! I was sure I knew you. That short petticoat, those embroidered pantalets, the scarlet cap, the basket, cake . . . Where the devil do you come from, my little Red-Riding-Hood?

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

From home; and I am going to my grandmamma's, to carry her a pot of butter.

POLONIUS.

Upon my honour! then you *are* the little Red-Riding-Hood? — the real Red-Riding-Hood?

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Goodness, yes! What is there so wonderful in that?

POLONIUS.

Not for all the world, my child, would I awaken cruel memories; and yet . . . I thought . . . I heard . . . that, once upon a time, you had been devoured . . .

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Alas!

POLONIUS.

By a wicked and deceitful wolf.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

'T was so.

POLONIUS.

It would never have happened except for your giddiness.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

How true that is!

POLONIUS.

But still — if, as you admit, you have been devoured by a wolf —

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

You must know, monsieur, that I have been devoured a great many times, and always through my own fault. Why, for four thousand years the same accident keeps happening to me; four thousand years have I resuscitated, and four thousand years, by some incredible fatality, I have inevitably put myself again in the jaws of the wolf. How can I help it? I die very young, and when I

return to the world I have such a vague, vague, vague remembrance of my previous existences . . . Oh! what an interesting story 't would be to read — and to write — that of Little Red-Riding-Hood throughout the Ages! M. Perrault has sketched one chapter; happy he who will write the rest.

POLONIUS.

Never did I see such an original creature!

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

And now, doctor, if you have nothing more to say to me, good-bye to you.

POLONIUS.

Stop! stop! I have a great deal to say to you. . . . How is it that you know me? You called me doctor.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Dr. Polonius; Christian name, La Palisse.

POLONIUS.

That 's right, quite right! Is n't she a darling? Look here, little one, as you are going to your grandmamma's and I am going the same way, suppose we walk together, will you?

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Oh, what fun! We 'll amuse ourselves, you 'll see! Hop! come on, quick, doctor. I advise you to catch up the tails of your coat; you 'll skip and

run much faster if you do... Forward, march! follow me!..

POLONIUS.

Here! here! which way are you going, you young scatter-brain? That's not the way to your grandmamma's; the highroad leads straight there.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Highroad! Pooh! do you take the highroad? in the dust! and the sun! and the coaches! Highroad indeed!.. No, I thank you.

POLONIUS.

Come, you silly thing, reflect for once in your life. The highroad is rather tiresome; I'll agree to that; but at least one is certain of arriving at a fixed time, and without much trouble.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Oh! doctor, see how sweet it is the other way... Birds, daisies, mulberries, such young grass!.. and brooks! Come along; it will make you laugh. I'll gather you bouquets, bunches as big as my head; we'll look in the heart of the flowers for all sorts of blue insects, and red ones, and we'll make ourselves wreaths with this bit of twine. You'll see, you'll see! Come, skip along the grass! Look, a handful of mulberries: don't you like mulberries, old paunch?

POLONIUS.

But the wolf, unhappy child?

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Ah, yes, that's true, the wolf! .. Bah! they are not about every day, those wolves! And besides, if there should be one, we'll ... we'll eat him.

POLONIUS, *feeling her head.*

This child has the bump of improvidence to a frightful degree.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Well! decidedly you won't come? Then, good-bye to you. Why the devil did you make me lose my time?

POLONIUS.

Ah! hapless creature!

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Adieu, doctor; look out for a sunstroke, my love. (*They separate.*)

SCENE SECOND.

Farther on in the forest; same scenery. RED-RIDING-HOOD, alone; then a CHILD.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Pooh! I'll drive away such sad ideas. In the first place, a wolf — a wolf is not so wicked as people say he is; perhaps he'll have pity on me — the next one... I'm very pretty to-day; I saw

myself just now in a leaf with a dew-drop on it. . . Besides, I am much stronger than most people; I'll seize my wolf by the throat, and — crack! . . All the same, 't would have amused me mightily to have cajoled that old asthmatic, and made him enter the great family of the hooded. . . But no! — narrow brain, drawers in order, always locked, nothing to be snatched out of them. . . I'll find something better than he. (*Enter the Child.*)

CHILD, *weeping.*

Oh, dear! oh, dear! I 'm much to be pitied.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

What makes you so doleful, my pretty one?

CHILD.

I 'm crying, mam'selle, because I 've got to go to school, and it is very dismal in this fine weather.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

In the first place, you are a ninny to cry. The good God did n't give you eyes to make fountains of them. Besides, if you spend all your tears to-day, what will you do when you grow up? you should lay by something for a rainy day. Come and sit here, by me, on the root of this tree. . . What is your name?

CHILD.

I 'm little Picou, son of big Picou who squints.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Well, little Picou, if you do as I say, we 'll have something to eat; and afterwards . . . we 'll see about it. What have you got in that basket?

CHILD.

Oh! mam'selle, I must n't touch that; that 's for my lunch, and mother Picou would make a fuss.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Are not you hungry?

CHILD.

Hoo! I ate a great bowlful of cabbage-soup just now . . . but all the same, I could lick up something more.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Then why don't you, little fool? Open your basket. . . Good! sweetmeats and fresh nuts. As for me, I 've got some cakes and a pot of butter. They are for grandmamma; but she can't eat them all, poor dear woman! (*They eat.*) How do you like it, hey?

CHILD, *his mouth full.*

Oh! it is good like everything. . . But what will mother Picou say?

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

What does that matter to you? She may say mass and vespers, but you have eaten the sweetmeats, anyhow.

CHILD.

That's very true, that is! .. Yes ... but then I can't have them for lunch.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

How stupid you are! you won't be hungry for lunch; you are not hungry now, are you?

CHILD.

No . . . that is, not very. (*He jumps up.*)

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Where are you going in such a hurry?

CHILD.

To school, parbleu!

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Why, you were crying about it just now.

CHILD, *hesitating.*

But, you see, I am afraid of being whipped ... to-morrow.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

If you go now, you will be whipped for being so long on the way. Play here to-day, since here you are; the thrashing to-morrow won't be worse than it would be to-day. Besides, who knows? . . . between now and then the schoolmaster may break his leg, or lightning may strike the school-house; it is close to the church, and lightning always strikes churches, they say.

CHILD.

My goodness! that 's true!

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Well, then, don't think about school . . . Do you hear the blackbirds whistling up there? Climb up and get me a pair of nests . . . Do birds go to school, the dear things? Gather the strawberries . . . a basketful of wild strawberries. *Jarni!* what a jolly lunch you 'll have! In school it is so hot; but here you can take off your clothes and stretch yourself out all naked on the sand of the brook. You can make boats with your knife out of bits of bark, and tear up your handkerchief for sails, and man them with blue ants and lady-birds. You 'll see what fun you 'll have.

CHILD.

Holy Virgin! what real music you talk. Won't you take me with you? I love you already with all my heart.

RED-RIDING-HOOD, *shaking her head.*

No, Picou, no; it is much better that you should stay here. If any harm happened to you with me I should feel badly. Come here and kiss me. . .

CHILD.

Yes, joyfully . . . How good you smell! Only just putting my lips to yours has made me feel I don't know how.

RED-RIDING-HOOD, *touched.*

Adieu, amuse yourself well.

CHILD.

Oh, yes! I shall amuse myself . . . All the same, I could eat a bit now, if I had it.

SCENE THIRD.

A glade in the wood. A MAN OF LETTERS lying on his back; a note-book on his stomach; a pencil between his teeth.

MAN OF LETTERS.

In vain I torture my brain and rub my eyes with my fists—nothing! . . . Not the heading of a sentence . . . not the tail of an idea—and there's my novel promised, without fail, for to-morrow. Ha! ten thousand devils! I, who came into the country solely to work with inspiration. . . (*Red-Riding-Hood appears.*)

RED-RIDING-HOOD, *singing.*

I 'm sister to a butterfly,
And comrade of a swallow,
Mine eye is keen, my waist is slim,
My flight is like an arrow;
It rains, it snows,
It hails, it blows,
But I,
Without umbrella, hat, or cloak,
I skim the plain and furrow.

Oh! oh! a man working! What a singular idea! (*Advancing towards the Man of Letters.*) Monsieur is an artist, no doubt?

MAN OF LETTERS.

What makes you think so, my charming child?

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Who else would ever dream of making a forest his work-shop?

MAN OF LETTERS.

Well, yes, I am an artist in romance; and I came here to write from nature. . . But . . . I can't be mistaken . . . I have seen you elsewhere. . . Ah! I know you, you are Red-Riding-Hood.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

So they say.

MAN OF LETTERS.

No! 'tis impossible; I dream with my eyes open. . . Quick! some holy water, the sign of the cross, that I may exorcise this vision of a devil.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Here's another kind of being!

MAN OF LETTERS.

Vade retro, Satanas. You are the demon of idleness, the demon of carelessness, the demon of improvidence. *Vade retro,* do you hear me? Oh! I know you; you are our worst enemy. Begone! purveyor of insane asylums; begone! succubus of hell. What did you do to Malfilâtre? What have you done to Hégésippe, and Gustave Planche, and that poor Gérard? What would you have

done with Lamartine? and what *have* you done with Abadie and with Traviès?

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

When you have quite finished, my dear . . .

MAN OF LETTERS.

I'll finish by crushing you, if you don't go away at once . . . accursèd viper!

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

You are not caressing, are you? . . Oh! I'm going, I'm going. But let me tell you that those to whom I do harm never complain; they know too well the delightful hours I have made them pass, and all the joys they owe to me. Yes, I am Red-Riding-Hood, the queen of the *Far niente*, the fancy-giving goddess of poets and lazzaroni; I'm the mistress of you all, and every one of you has built me a temple in his heart. Well, well, I forgive your insults because I love you, and you love me. . . Why, at this very moment, ungrateful wretch! you are about to owe me a day of happiness. Look about you: the weather is superb, the woods are full of silent freshness; above your head the song of birds, and at your feet the brooks are purling. Half-close your eyes, sweet poet; lay down your head upon this mossy bank . . . let yourself go, let yourself go . . . twelve hours of revery before you; twelve beauteous hours in spotless robes and crowned with flowers. Farewell, my poet; the woods are woods, the dreamer

dreams. . . Good-night. (*She flings his note-book among the trees.*)

MAN OF LETTERS, *dreamily.*

Kiss me, Red-Riding-Hood. Heavens! . . what bliss . . . this is!

SCENE FOURTH.

The edge of a thicket. Enter two LOVERS. RED-RIDING-HOOD, concealed among the bushes, watches them.

HE.

You are tired, Marie; lean upon my arm.

SHE.

No, I would rather sit upon the ground. See! here is an open space; the sun has dried the grass. Let us stay here awhile.

RED-RIDING-HOOD, *concealed.*

'T is droll how women always take the initiative in love.

HE.

Shall I open your sunshade and hold it over you?

RED-RIDING-HOOD, *concealed.*

Ninny! as if his hands were in his way.

SHE.

Thank you, no; the branches of that larch are shading me enough.

HE.

Is it not sweet that we are here, my Marie, away from noise, far from the world? . . Shade, silence, and our love!

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Bravo! he improves.

SHE, *resting her head upon his shoulder.*

Yes, but I feel afraid; see how, against my will, I tremble; I know not what this means; the slightest breeze disturbs me; at the slightest sound I quiver — Oh! I'm afraid.

HE.

My treasure, calm yourself. Why should you fear? why tremble? Shall we return and find your mother?

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Idiot! how that reveals his eighteen years.

SHE.

Oh, no! I am too happy here, with you. (*Silence.*)

RED-RIDING-HOOD, *provoked.*

I do believe they will not say a word!

SHE.

Ah! my poor dearest, why did I ever know you? (*Sound of kisses.*)

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

That's more decided. At any rate, I'll show myself and give them some advice. (*Comes out of her concealment.*)

THE LOVERS, *together.*

Heavens!
Good God!

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

There! there! don't be alarmed. I am Red-Riding-Hood . . . child like yourselves, and, what is more, the patroness of lovers. Embrace each other; it fills my heart with joy; each kiss is tingling on my lips delightfully. Again! again!

HE, *interrupting his kisses.*

Ah! my dear Red-Riding-Hood, we are much to be pitied.

SHE, *not interrupting hers.*

Ah! yes, indeed, much to be pitied.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

And why, if you please?

HE.

Because, as you must see, we love each other with all our souls, but they will not let us marry.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Well?

HE.

Well . . . that is all; and is n't it enough?

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Can you tell me, children, what roses are for, and why the good God has strewn them in our path, if not to be gathered and inhaled? And can you tell also why we find paths among the bushes, and glades in the wood? Why are they here, if not for lovers? Ah! if they will not let you marry, my poor children, I pity you. Never forget that to-morrow is a great deceiver . . . and don't forget the roses, or the bushes either. . . (*She disappears.*)

SHE.

Did you understand her?

HE.

No.

SHE.

I think I did.

SCENE FIFTH.

In the depths of the Wood.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

The sight of those two children troubles me. What a lovely thing is love! As for me — no one loves me. Some pity me, others hate me; those who adore me never tell me so. . . I remember that once upon a time a robin redbreast loved me. . . He died of it, I think. . . Ah! does it rain? I felt a drop upon my hand. . . Once in a while I weep, but never long. (*Sings.*)

I 'm sister to a butterfly
And comrade of a swallow.

Heavens! who is that queer person that I see down there? What capers he is cutting! what leaps, what gambols! He is walking on his head! How funny! how amusing! Ha, ha, ha! I 'll make him play with me... Here! man! man! man! (*Enter the Lunatic.*)

LUNATIC.

Who called? Was it you, my little girl, who called me?

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Yes, 't was I — Red-Riding-Hood; I wish to ask if it would please you that we play together. You seem to me so very joyful.

LUNATIC.

As for being joyful, I am very joyful. Ah! you are Red-Riding-Hood are you? Pray, what is that?.. Yes, yes, I remember — a girl who loves flowers and lives in a wood. I love flowers too; shall I make you a crown with the leaves of this willow?.. She is very pretty as she is... By the bye, did you tell me your name? I've forgotten it.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Red-Riding-Hood.

LUNATIC.

I 'm always forgetting... But tell me, you won't take me back, will you? (*Weeping.*) I am so

happy to be free; I hurt no one. Little girl, I implore you, don't take me back.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Back where?

LUNATIC.

To the doctor, — the fat man with spectacles, who sprinkles me with cold water every day like the kitchen-garden.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Goodness! he is crazy; I should never have guessed it.

LUNATIC.

My brain is a little wrong; but that 's no reason why they should freeze my skull and make my ears smart.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Don't be afraid; I 'll not take you back. Is it long since you got away?

LUNATIC.

I don't know. When one is happy one never knows how long it is. Shall I tell you the story of the humming-bird and the princess? But first, you must tell me your name; I keep forgetting it.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

How amusing he is! This is the tenth time I 've told him. . . My name is RED-RIDING-HOOD.

LUNATIC.

Red-Riding-Hood, sit on my knee, and listen to my story.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

No, no! it is late; it is getting dark; I must run quick to grandmamma.

LUNATIC.

Come, I'll begin—

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

No, hold your tongue, I'm going. (*Does not go.*) Good-bye.

LUNATIC.

Begone!

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Well, don't be cross; I'll stay. Tell me the story. (*The howl of a wolf is heard.*)

LUNATIC.

Then come and sit upon my knee. What is the matter? why do you tremble?

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Did you hear that dreadful beast? Hoo! hoo!

LUNATIC.

Don't be afraid; I am here.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

How nice he is, my lunatic. Well, I 'm listening. (*Slips her arm around his neck.*)

LUNATIC.

Once upon a time, there was a humming-bird and a princess who were desperately in love... Are you asleep?

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

No, my friend — a humming-bird and a princess...

LUNATIC.

Unluckily, people opposed their marriage because the humming-bird... Are you listening?

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Yes, but don't tell it so loud.

LUNATIC.

One evening the humming-bird said to the princess...

RED-RIDING-HOOD, *half asleep.*

It is... very... pretty... that story.

LUNATIC.

She sleeps; I feel her breath upon my cheek... how slow she breathes... Her ear-rings tickle my skin... I 'm very happy.

(*He falls asleep; the wolf goes by them, galloping.*)

SCENE SIXTH.

Broad daylight. The birds are singing as they wake. Near-by, is the house of grandmamma. The blinds are closed. Beside the house, a well.

THE CHILD, *running in, his eyes red, a cudgel in his hand.*

I'll sit down here, and wait till she comes . . . and then I'll give her a good, sound thrashing with this club of mine. (*Sits in a corner.*)

MAN OF LETTERS, *entering, his face convulsed.*

Where is she, that cursèd counsellor? I'll strangle her; I'll drive her from the face of the globe!

CHILD.

If you are looking for Red-Riding-Hood, do as I do; sit down; she'll be here before long.

THE LOVER *enters, sobbing.*

Oh! that miserable creature! I'll hide me somewhere, and make her dearly pay for the sorrows she has caused.

SCENE SEVENTH.

The same; the LUNATIC, RED-RIDING-HOOD; *the latter come skipping along, arm in arm.*

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

You see, my friend, how frankly I speak to you. You are the only man in the world who can under-

stand me, and I swear I will never forget you. . . Promise to think of me sometimes, won't you?

LUNATIC.

Yes I will, I will. . . But you must tell me your name. Did you tell me before?

RED-RIDING-HOOD, *wiping away a tear.*

Alas! the only man I ever loved! . . Here, friend, lend me your back to jump into that cherry-tree; I want to make me ear-rings of those cherries.

THE THREE SUFFERERS, *appearing suddenly.*

Here she is, at last!

RED-RIDING-HOOD, *slightly frightened.*

What do you want of me, good people? With whom are you so angry? Oh, what furious faces!

ALL THREE AT ONCE.

It is you, you, you, we are angry with. . . It is your blood we want.

RED-RIDING-HOOD, *to Lunatic.*

Here! friend! To me! Help! Help!

LUNATIC.

Those cherries are very good.

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

Messieurs! messieurs! explain first . . . my blood can flow later. (*To the Child.*) Begin, you. What do you want with me?

(*To the Lunatic.*) And you, give me a kiss, a bit of a kiss, a last bit.

LUNATIC, *skipping about and not hearing her.*

So then the humming-bird said to the princess: The moment has come to part. . . Tra la la, la la la, la la la, la la!

RED-RIDING-HOOD.

He has not much memory, my lover. (*Eight o'clock strikes.*) There! the time has come; all romances have an end, mine like the rest; it is a little shorter than most, that's all. Good-bye to the company. (*She enters the house.*)

ALL.

Good-bye, Red-Riding-Hood! (*A terrible noise is heard within.*)

SCENE EIGHTH.

The same.

POLONIUS, *rushing in.*

Stop! Stop! . . Alas! I am always too late. . . Oh! how wisdom and experience come limping after youth and folly! No matter what haste I make, I never arrive in time to save Red-Riding-Hood from the jaws of that wolf. (*Addressing those around him.*) Ha! you people, I can guess who you are — victims of that poor unfortunate little thing. Follow me; I'll repair the harm she has

done, and put you back into the right path. (*To the lunatic, who is not listening.*) Come, monsieur.

LUNATIC.

No, thanks, thanks. I have finished my story; the humming-bird is dead. You would take me back to the hospital. I prefer to drown myself. I like novels that end badly. (*Jumps into the well.*)

POLONIUS, *gravely.*

The fate of fools and all imprudent people — of little Red-Riding-Hood and her like. Public, take warning.

THE SOULS OF PARADISE.

MYSTERY IN TWO TABLEAUS.

THE SOULS OF PARADISE.

FIRST TABLEAU.

IN THIS WORLD.

SCENE FIRST.

A lovers' nest. It is late. The MISTRESS is dying on the bed. The LOVER weeps by her pillow. In a corner, the NURSE snores. The night-lamp dimly lights the chamber.

THE LOVER.

Do you still suffer?

THE MISTRESS.

Oh, yes; I am ill, very ill; my temples burn; my feet ache, they are so cold. Feel them.

THE LOVER.

Poor little feet!

THE MISTRESS.

No matter; so long as you are by me death cannot frighten me. At your side I have no fear; I feel that you are stronger than the grave.

THE LOVER.

Yes, dear soul, yes! I am strong, and I love you; none dare snatch you from my arms.

THE MISTRESS.

No; I will not let you kiss me; fever and death are exhaling from me.

THE LOVER.

And I, I will not let you speak in that way; this that you have is almost nothing; doctors are fools — do you hear me? one and all, they are asses — Oh! you suffer. Shall I wake the nurse?

THE NURSE, *waking with a start.*

Here I am, here! Don't be frightened, my little lady; this is only a spasm; it will soon pass. I have seen plenty get well who were worse than you. (*Comes to the bedside.*)

THE MISTRESS.

Thank you, good woman; I feel better; leave me. (*To her lover in a low voice.*) Heavens! how ugly that old woman is!

THE NURSE, *muttering.*

When the worms are at your satin you'll be uglier than I, be sure of that. (*Goes to sleep again.*)

THE MISTRESS.

I know not what it means, but I feel as though my senses were tenfold keener with a marvellous perception. My eyes see far and clear, so that mere looking hurts them; I hear a thousand unknown sounds, — my heart that beats, the floor that

cracks. My skin seems to me soft and of a strange transparency. How beautiful you are, my love, and oh! what misery if I lose you!

THE LOVER.

Why talk of parting when we are folded in each other's arms? Why torture, why alarm ourselves so needlessly?

THE MISTRESS.

Oh! I am not alarmed; I swear to you that with your hand in mine, your eyes in my eyes, your breath upon my lips, I am ready to start on that great journey without regret. To die in the fulness of joy, in the fulness of love! . . I have always dreamed of going thus. . . Ah! what is it?

THE LOVER.

You see — I weep.

THE MISTRESS.

What! you weep? you weep, and I have caused it! . . Come quick, dear eyes, that I may drink your tears. . . There! 't is done; let us speak of it no more. (*Long silence.*) I must love you much to feel no shadow of remorse about that other. . . Can I help it? . . Love for you so fills my heart that there is left no corner into which remorse or thoughts of the past can enter.

THE LOVER.

Dear wife!

THE MISTRESS.

That day when, to follow you, I broke with all, I abandoned all, I said to myself that the hour would doubtless come when I should weep bitterly for the wicked action to which my heart compelled me. Well, I now assure you, friend, that that sad hour has never come, will never come. No, I do not regret my sin; and for the man I love I am ready... Oh! I suffer! I suffer!..

(*Some one knocks; the Nurse, waking with a start, opens the door.*)

THE MISTRESS, *lifting herself, terrified.*

Who is there? Oh! who is there, my friend?

THE NURSE, *returning.*

Monsieur, it is a priest.

THE LOVER.

A priest! Who sent for him? Why has he come? There is no need for him here.

THE MISTRESS, *hiding her face.*

Oh! a priest! a priest!

THE NURSE.

He is the rector of the church next door; a worthy man. He sends good bordeaux to all the sick whom he confesses.

THE LOVER.

Tell him to go away.

SCENE SECOND.

The same; the PRIEST.

THE PRIEST, *advancing.*

How often is it thus; they welcome a quack doctor and drive away the priest.

THE LOVER, *going forward to meet him.*

Why do you come here, monsieur? You know well that your presence alarms the sick; they see an omen of death in the folds of your cassock. No one is dying, Monsieur l'abbé; you have nothing to do here with us.

THE MISTRESS.

Hush, love.

THE PRIEST.

I do not come for those who die, but for those who wish to live.

THE LOVER.

We have lived without you until now; go to those who want you.

THE MISTRESS.

Oh! hush! in pity, hush!

THE NURSE.

Monsieur, what you are saying will bring evil to your lady.

THE LOVER, *exasperated.*

Old beggar! you! be silent, or I drive you hence. By heaven's thunder! I am master here! (*He goes to his mistress and takes her hand.*) And you, dear wife, will you consent to admit a stranger to your heart? That soul, the golden key of which I — I alone — have held, would you open it to another than your lover? What! would you make me jealous of a man who comes to rob us of our dearest secrets, to enter brutally our sanctuary, and trample underfoot the treasures of our love? What misery for me to see you whisper to another man, pouring your sorrows in another breast than mine, weeping on a stranger's shoulder the tears that are not tears of love for me? If it be true that you are now to die, is it not dreadful to take away from me the few last moments that remain to us? On the eve of a great departure, an eternal separation, is not our every moment inestimably precious? My love, my love, answer me!

THE PRIEST, *approaching on the other side of the bed and taking her other hand.*

My daughter, before you enter the presence of God, do you not wish to purify your soul and restore to it its spotless robe of innocence? Will you consent to condemn yourself to eternal suffering? And if the thought of yourself does not touch you, will you deliver to the tortures of hell that unhappy soul which adultery has bound to yours?

THE MISTRESS.

You pain me cruelly, both of you.

THE PRIEST.

My daughter, death is here, and God follows it.

THE LOVER.

Wife, wife, I am near you; wife, I love you.

THE MISTRESS.

Oh! what I feel is terrible... What a duel! what a struggle! The sight of that priest awakens in me a whole vast universe of terror and remorse... Remorse assails me, but love does not depart... Listen, monsieur — and you, dear love, listen to me, I implore you; — do not torture me too far, will you? Since I must die, you ought to spare me; — in pity, spare me! (*To the Priest.*) I desire to hear the good words that you bring me, monsieur; but you must not speak against him; — it would be in vain. (*To the Lover.*) Fear not; I am all and always yours, and I feel that in punishing my soul I shall only render it more worthy of your love — Monsieur, I will listen to you.

THE PRIEST.

My daughter, God speaks to you through my lips, and speaks to you alone.

THE MISTRESS.

You hear him, friend.

THE LOVER.

So, then, you drive me from you, you drive me out!

THE MISTRESS.

No, no; you will come back to me; you will find me then more lovable. (*With a failing hand she sends him a kiss. The Lover and the Nurse go out.*)

SCENE THIRD.

The PRIEST, the MISTRESS.

THE PRIEST.

In the name of the living God, my daughter, I adjure you to forget the things of this world and to think only of your eternal safety.

THE MISTRESS.

Alas! monsieur, the things of this world are all I know.

THE PRIEST.

There are more that you must learn.

THE MISTRESS.

I would gladly learn those of which I am ignorant, but not forget the ones I know.

THE PRIEST.

Beware lest God, he too, will not forget them.

THE MISTRESS.

God may forbid me to live, but he cannot forbid me to love.

THE PRIEST.

God does not forbid to live, God does not forbid to love. God wills virtuous life, and love unstained. Have you loved purely, have you lived virtuously? If you are sure of your life and of yourself, if nothing stirs within your conscience at my words, you are triply blest, my daughter, and all I have to do is to give you the blessing of peace.

THE MISTRESS.

I am only a poor creature who has followed always the impulse of her heart; that heart did not wish for him they gave it for its master; it gave itself elsewhere. The man you saw beside my pillow is my lover. One day, weary of my barren duties as an unloving wife, I said to him: "Take me away; I cannot live unless with you." From that day we have loved each other like lost souls.

THE PRIEST.

Unhappy children!

THE MISTRESS.

You see, I know you do, that your religion can do nothing for me. It orders me to think no more of him who was my life and joy; at that price only can I enter Paradise. But I being dead, the precious being whom I leave alone will never pardon

me my treachery at this last moment; he will curse my memory, he will curse God for whom I have deserted him; and when the sad hour sounds for him he will not come to me; I shall be left to enjoy alone the delights of Paradise. Oh! what will it then be to me, that heaven away from him I love? And what remorse amid my joys, to think that another — and what another, oh, my God! — is paying with eternal torture for his fidelity to our mutual oaths of eternal love, while I, — I, the renegade, the faithless, — I peacefully enjoy the price of my pious treachery!

THE PRIEST.

God, who takes pity upon all weakness, has thought of this, my child. In paradise his saints enjoy a perfect bliss, untroubled by earthly memories. There you will love God only, daughter, and forget the rest.

THE MISTRESS.

Forget! forget! Ah! that is the one great word of your religion.

THE PRIEST.

My daughter, do not drive away the God of mercy, who asks only to forgive you; humble yourself, poor sinner, clasp your hands and bow your head and pray — pray; there still is time. Come, a single thought of penitence; come, one ardent prayer to cleanse those lips, to wash that heart of impure contact and attachment. Pray, my daughter; God is listening; he judges and he pardons you. (*After some hesitation she clasps her hands*

and bows her head. They talk together long in a low voice.)

THE MISTRESS, *lifting her head.*

I can die now, for I am reconciled with God.

SCENE FOURTH.

The PRIEST, the MISTRESS, the LOVER.

THE LOVER *opening the door.*

Is my torture ended? Have they finished that whispered talk? (*Approaches the bed.*)

THE PRIEST, *kneeling.*

My son, do not trouble this soul in prayer.

THE LOVER.

Dear love, turn your eyes towards me a little.

THE MISTRESS, *in a feeble voice.*

I feel an unspeakable comfort; I breathe more freely. How sweet is peace of heart — how good to die in peace.

THE PRIEST.

Take this crucifix and lay it on your lips.

THE LOVER.

Dear mistress, answer me; I am at your feet, I speak to you.

THE MISTRESS, *in ecstasy.*

I hear above the voices calling me.

THE LOVER.

No, no, dear wife, 't is I entreating — 't is I, your lover.

THE PRIEST.

Kneel, my son, and pray for her.

THE LOVER.

Kneel! — why should I? — kneel! — my place is in her arms. Leave us; you hinder me from being with my wife.

THE MISTRESS, *more and more feebly.*

Stay by me, father; exhort, sustain me!

THE LOVER.

Oh, pity on me! she loves me no longer! they have told her not to love me!

THE MISTRESS.

I go to thee, my God.

THE LOVER, *bursting into tears.*

I knew it! — oh! I knew it!

THE PRIEST.

Courage, my daughter! God beholds you; he stretches forth his arms to you.

THE LOVER.

Oh! a look! thy last look! A kiss! thy last kiss! Love, friend, mistress, wife, turn to me once, once more! That last caress that trembles on thy

lips, — for whom dost thou keep it, to whom wilt thou give it?

THE MISTRESS.

My God, I love thee. (*Dies.*)

THE LOVER.

She is dead! she is dead! (*Falls on a seat, his head in his hands.*)

THE PRIEST.

May her brave soul repose in peace with the Lord. (*He rises, closes the eyes of the Mistress, draws the curtains of the bed, and approaches the Lover.*)

THE LOVER.

Dead, without speaking to me! — dead, without bidding me farewell!

THE PRIEST.

My son, God cannot bless a criminal union. Let this death be to you a salutary warning.

THE LOVER.

Dead, ashamed of me! — dead, denying me!

THE PRIEST.

Return to God, my son; with him alone is consolation. God will cure you of this fatal love.

THE LOVER.

I desire to weep in peace; leave me. I salute you.

THE PRIEST.

You are not so rooted in evil . . .

THE LOVER, *rising.*

Monsieur, sorrow will sometimes make a man malignant; I advise you to go. You have taken my mistress from me; you have robbed me of her love, of her last look, her last caress, things that belonged to me; there is nothing more that you can take from here — believe me: go!

THE PRIEST, *withdrawing.*

Unhappy man!

SCENE FIFTH.

The LOVER, the NURSE.

THE NURSE, *timidly.*

Monsieur? . . Monsieur? . .

THE LOVER, *his head in his hands.*

I, who loved her so

THE NURSE.

Am I to sew up the body?

THE LOVER.

Wait till to-night, and you will have two instead of one.

SECOND TABLEAU.

IN THE OTHER WORLD.

SCENE FIRST.

Hell. The circle of suicides. The lost come and go howling, amid the flames. The LOVER enters, in charge of two demons.

THE DAMNED.

WHO is this brother in woe who enters here? Blood flows in streams from his wounded breast and leaves upon his way a long red trace. How weak he is! how pale! Still another to whom life was a burden who has cast it from him. Quick! make him a place among us that he may learn what we suffer here below because we would not suffer in the world above.

THE LOVER.

What a dream, what an awful dream! The smoke is choking me . . . the flames blind me. . .

THE DEMONS, *consulting together.*

This case is grave; into which circle shall we take him? Must we put him with the atheists, the adulterers, or the suicides? Guilty of all three crimes: he lived with a married woman; he has blasphemed God; he has died by his own act. The case is grave; we must consider it. You, lost

soul (*addressing the Lover*), you may walk about amid the flames; these triple walls of brass secure your person. (*They continue to deliberate.*)

THE LOVER.

This nightmare is horrific!

THE DAMNED, *surrounding him.*

Brother, tell us your history; in no other way can we soothe suffering here.

THE LOVER.

Again, again! . . who are these black phantoms, these calcined skeletons? . . It is my dream continuing; I shall wake up in bed, in my chamber lit with sunshine, the song-birds piping at my window, my mistress by my side.

THE DAMNED.

He is still in the period of dreams — we all have passed through that. When he sees that his dream lasts days, months, years, centuries, eternities, he may begin, perhaps, to think he is awake.

THE LOVER.

Can we have air here, messieurs? I swear that I am choking.

THE DAMNED.

In a hundred thousand years you will still be swearing that you choke.

THE LOVER.

No, I am not asleep! No, I do not dream! Never did such sufferings seize a man in dreams... Oh! now I recollect.

THE DAMNED.

If you can recollect, speak, tell us your story.

THE LOVER.

I remember that I loved a woman; I remember that she died; I remember that I killed myself to join her quickly; then, the cold of a knife in my breast, the sense of a mighty fall, a contact with burning flame, and a suffocating heat: that is what I can remember.

THE DAMNED.

And your mistress? Have you found her? Where is she?

THE LOVER, *in a low voice.*

She made her peace with God before she died.

THE DAMNED.

Then we pity you; for our sorrows are nothing like to your sorrows. The tortures of hell to you are doubled by an eternal separation.

THE LOVER.

She was converted only in the act of death; and I still hope that God may not have pardoned her.

THE DAMNED.

In that case you will find her here; or rather, no — you will know that she is here, but that you cannot join her, penned as you are with us, in the circle of the suicides.

THE TWO DEMONS.

Approach, thrice damned one; hear the decision we have come to on your case. Wandering Jew of hell! you shall belong to no circle of the damned; you shall wander from one to the other throughout eternity, to-day with the atheists, to-morrow with the adulterers, to receive your share of all the punishments even as you had part in all the vices. — Off! start! march!

THE DAMNED.

Au revoir, brother, au revoir! and may you encounter in our flames the woman that you seek!

(*The Lover departs, followed by the demons. Cries of rage and howls of pain are heard.*)

SCENE SECOND.

Same tableau as before. DEMONS and DAMNED.

(*Enter the Lover.*)

THE LOVER.

Vainly I seek her; she is not here; at last I have the certainty that she abjured me when she

died! And I, I am condemned to eternal torment because I was not false to my oath of love. Go, wretched being! from circle to circle, pursued by devouring flames; march on, march ever, march without rest or pause; feel every torture, take thy share in every pain, while above, thy renegade false wife amid her cool delightful paradise beholds thee burn.

THE DAMNED.

Well, brother, have you found the woman whom you sought?

THE LOVER.

Crossing the circle of adulterers I saw couples eternally bound together, rolling, writhing amid the flames. Oh! how they suffered, how wretched were they! And yet their misery made me envious, their sufferings made me jealous; I wept, thinking they at least were two to suffer.

THE DAMNED.

Yes, we comprehend your grief that she you loved is in none of these infernal regions. But in that case, brother, brief happiness is now before you, for you will see her this very day.

THE LOVER.

What! she is here? she is among you? You knew it, and you saw me weep, you let me suffer! Quick, quick, speak, tell me where she is, that I may fling myself within her arms.

THE DAMNED.

Listen: your mistress is in Paradise, and yet you will see her. You came here but yesterday and you know not yet the customs of this place; but you have time enough to learn them. Know, damned novice, that to-day is the day of the Fête-Dieu. On this day, which comes to us once a year, the infernal caldrons cease to boil, the furnaces are quenched, the instruments of torture are laid aside, the demons cross their arms, — in a word, hell stops work. And then that brazen ceiling, heated white, that weighs upon our heads, yawns open; and there, high up, oh, very high, we see them pass, gliding among the clouds, — the saints, the cherubim, the angels and archangels, thrones, dominions, powers, making their procession around heaven, and scattering flowers — whole baskets full — and perfumes from their incense cups. Behind walk gravely, and with lowered eyes, the processional of Blessed Ones; among them you will see the one you seek.

THE LOVER.

Blessings upon you, brothers, for the good news you give me, and the breath of hope you have slid into my soul. If I can see my mistress I am saved.

THE DAMNED.

Saved? What mean you by that?

THE LOVER.

Think you that my voice will not reach her ear?

THE DAMNED.

Her ear, perhaps, but not her soul. . .

THE LOVER.

Oh! I am certain that when she sees the man she loved so well, and hears the voice that was so dear to her, she will come down and share my sufferings, or else pray God to let me share her joy.

THE DAMNED.

Ah! poor Wandering Jew, you are indeed a simpleton!

THE LOVER.

Why? do you think that God denies the prayers of souls in paradise?

THE DAMNED.

The souls in paradise refuse the prayers of souls in hell.

THE LOVER.

Ah, no! you know not my dear mistress; you know not how she loved me. The approach of death, the exhortations of the priest troubled her brain in that last hour; but a single word — I know, I am very sure — a single word of mine will bring her to me, as it ever did.

THE DAMNED.

The air of heaven is fatal to the memory. Each one of us up there has some dear friend, a parent, brother, sister, mother, wife; from those most

cherished beings we have never yet obtained a single look.

THE LOVER.

You have never loved — as I.

THE DAMNED.

Well, well! look up; the hour has come to prove the fact. May you, poor soul, be happier than we.

SCENE THIRD.

The roof of hell opens. Music is heard of infinite sweetness. The celestial procession advances through the clouds. SAINT PETER, with the keys of Paradise in his hand, comes last. In the line of cherubim walks the MISTRESS, robed in white. The saints, both men and women, scatter flowers.

THE DAMNED.

They come! they come! . . How beautiful! . . Oh! that delicious breath of air that reaches even here! and how exquisite that odour of the incense!

ONE OF THE DAMNED.

See, in the midst of the Blessed Souls, the one who walks with head inclined, a golden missal in her hand, and that beautiful white hair in bands upon her forehead — My heart and eyes they recognize her, — it is my mother!

ANOTHER OF THE DAMNED.

My eyes and my heart too, they recognize that little cherub draped in muslin, with the azure

sash. See, now she waves, with all the strength of her dimpled, rosy arms, a banner with golden flowers that are larger than herself; it is my sister, my little Anna, whom I mourned so long.

FIRST DAMNED.

Poor mother! how she loved me once! 'T was she who suckled me; yes, she herself, — a little creature, who had scarce three breaths of life. She loved me so! . . I was never joyous, that she did not smile — nor sad, that she did not weep. — Ah! sorrow to me! her heart has changed — now that she lives on high.

SECOND DAMNED.

Dear sister, adored and precious sister! . . She died on the day of her first communion; she was an angel strayed from home; but she has forgotten, since she returned there, the beloved brother who told her stories in the winter evenings.

FIRST DAMNED.

Mother, mother! one look upon your son! upon the dear, beloved one of other days! — Alas! she has passed already; my cries have not so much as shaken her gentle, rhythmic step.

SECOND DAMNED.

Sister darling! it is thy brother calling — thy brother who carried thee so often on his shoulder, who danced thee in his arms! — Nothing, nothing! not a look! . . (*He weeps.*)

THE DAMNED, *to the Lover.*

Well, brother, what say you now? Do you still have confidence?

THE LOVER.

Yes, always! My dear mistress is worth far more than all those women. (*At this moment a rain of roses falls among the damned. They snatch them from one another furiously.*)

A DAMNED ONE, *chewing a rose.*

Oh! flowers! how good they are!

A DEMON, *approaching him.*

That rose you are enjoying will cost you dear to-night.

CHOIR OF ANGELS.

Glory to God in the highest!

THE LOVER.

I do not see her — yet.

THE DAMNED.

She must be, like you, among the late arrivals; look in the last ranks.

THE LOVER, *with transport.*

I see her! I see her! — The third to the left, last line but one. How beautiful she is! more beautiful a thousand times than I have ever seen her. Oh! my eyes can never satisfy themselves in looking at her! Brothers, brothers, embrace me; I am happy.

A DEMON, *approaching him.*

You will pay for that happiness to-night; meanwhile take that — on account. (*Strikes him.*)

THE LOVER, *rolling on the ground.*

O pity upon me! How I suffer!

CHOIR OF ANGELS.

Glory to God in the highest!

THE LOVER, *in a terrible voice.*

Help! help! my mistress! Here, to me!

SAINT PETER.

Do you hear that cry of agony, my children? Some sinner they are torturing below. Poor, poor souls!

THE LOVER.

Mistress! love! to me, to me!

SAINT PETER, *to the souls in paradise.*

I think, dear friends, he calls to one of you.

THE LOVER.

Marie, Marie, dear wife!

SAINT PETER.

Yes, no doubt of it, some one is calling. Harps of gold and choirs celestial, silence!

THE LOVER.

Marie, 't is I who call you, I — thy lover, master.

SAINT PETER, *to the Mistress.*

Mademoiselle Marie, your name has been pronounced below; lean down upon that cloud and see what they want of you.

THE MISTRESS, *bending over hell.*

Who called me?

THE LOVER.

Ah! I knew that you would answer me! They said you had forgotten; it is not true, it is not true! Stay, stay, as you are, let me contemplate long that lovely, gentle face.

SAINT PETER, *to the Mistress.*

Then you know that poor lost man, dear soul?

THE MISTRESS.

No, great Saint Peter; I assure you not.

SAINT PETER.

Make sure, my dear; look well and see.

THE MISTRESS.

No! no! Never have I known that blackened face where sin is written, those eyes burnt out, those eyelids scorched, those calcined limbs all black with soot; why should you think I knew him?

THE LOVER.

Yes, I comprehend you; you seek to come to me, or draw me up to you. Oh! what a clasp

when we shall meet; what joy to renew within the arms of death the loves of life!

THE SOULS IN PARADISE.

It seems as though our sister must have known him formerly.

THE MISTRESS, *indignantly.*

I have known naught but paradise, I have loved none but God. Great Saint Peter, tell that sinner he is mistaken.

SAINT PETER, *to the Lover.*

My poor child, the dear soul says she does not know you.

THE DEMONS AND THE DAMNED, *chuckling.*

Ha! ha! ha!.. Hi! hi! hi!

THE LOVER.

A lie, an awful lie! those eyes that plunged in mine so often, those lips that knew their way to mine, that hair that kissed my own, those arms that clasped me — all, all of them know me, they must know me. Marie, thou hast not forgotten our little chamber in the rue de l'Ouest, and the life of love we led there?

THE MISTRESS, *to Saint Peter.*

I do not know of what he speaks.

SAINT PETER.

Bless me! but listen: if you both lived in the rue de l'Ouest —

THE LOVER.

And those long summer evenings — the windows open — the cooling fragrance of the Luxembourg, its great trees waving in the shades before us, the melodious keyboard where thy little hands strayed at the bidding of thy soul — all these things of our love, this frame of our passion, dost thou deny them all?

SAINT PETER, *to the Mistress.*

There! I'm curious to know what you will say to that.

THE MISTRESS.

I know not what he means.

THE LOVER.

No, no; she cannot have forgotten all — our rides through the wood in the misty days of autumn, those long reveries beside the ponds at Chaville; the tears, mysterious, that filled our eyes; the rapturous quiver that shook her hand upon my arm, my arm beneath her hand . . . and our dinners on the grass, with kisses for dessert . . . and that day when the watchman at Viroflay caught her climbing up a cherry-tree — dost thou remember, Marie? the cherries danced upon thy hair — oh! how adorable thou wast, and the old guard fined thee but a kiss upon his withered cheek — ah! how I laughed that day, good God!

THE MISTRESS.

Let us go on, Saint Peter; this unhappy man is mad.

SAINT PETER, *to the Mistress.*

But, my daughter, search carefully in your memory; have you never known this unfortunate fellow somewhere? God will not be angry with you, I am sure; and a kind word would do such good to that poor lost soul. On your conscience, can you not remember Chaville, or recall Viroflay?

THE MISTRESS.

Viroflay — Chaville — No! I have never known them.

SAINT PETER, *to the Lover.*

Dear child, poor child, cease your cries and prayers; prayers and cries will not avail: she remembers nothing.

THE LOVER.

Ah! the vile creature, the wicked creature! You, whom I loved so well, for whom I lived, for whom I died, have you not so much as a memory, a regret, a tear to give me in return? Nothing! Nothing remains to me in your heart; not even hatred, nor disgust, nothing but forgetfulness, oblivion! You do not recognize this ravaged, ruined body; these features horribly disfigured you forget; and yet you are the cause of this destruction and these wounds! It was through you, it is for you that I am here — and it is with you I ought to be. Without your fatal love I should not have known adultery, I should not have committed suicide. . . Well, for all my sufferings

past and to come, for compensation of my eternal woes, I ask but one thing only; I ask of you a memory— Speak, cursèd creature, speak, beloved woman, and tell me that you remember.

SAINT PETER, *greatly moved.*

Oh! the poor child! He truly grieves me; I feel quite sorrowful. (*A big tear glides adown his cheek and rolls to hell; a lost soul licks it up.*)

LOST SOUL.

Oh! 't is good to drink!

A DEMON, *approaching him.*

To you, in an hour, a pint of liquid lead.

THE LOVER, *in a voice of agony.*

Do not go! Marie, do not leave me!

THE MISTRESS, *resuming her place.*

Shall we soon move on, Saint Peter?

SAINT PETER.

We must, since you remember nothing. It can't be helped, but I shall long be sad. Come, let us start! Ye golden harps and choirs celestial, a little music!

(*The music begins again, the procession starts once more, the roof of hell is closed.*)

SCENE FOURTH.

Hell in all its horror. The LOVER, the DAMNED, the DEMONS.

THE DAMNED.

That 's over, till next year.

THE DEMONS.

Now, then, ye damned, back to your furnaces; you 'll have to expiate your holiday of this day cruelly. You, Wandering Jew, resume your maddened rush throughout the circles; torches of hell, be lighted; stream down, ye rivers of boiling oil, and roar, ye scarlet caldrons! Flames! flames! let all things flame, while a vast howl of anguish informs the King of Heaven that his angels here in hell perform their duty. Come, Wandering Jew, march off!

THE LOVER, *raising his calcined fists to heaven.*

March, so be it! and, since she has forgotten me, I — I will remember. Yes, on that pure white bread of love which she denies me, I will feed eternally — eternally! Keep your joys, unhappy souls of paradise. To me they are insufficient; I do not want them at the price they cost. Ten thousand times do I prefer this hell where a lover can remember, to that heaven where the mistress must forget.

THE TRUMPET AND THE TRUMPETER.

THE TRUMPET AND THE TRUMPETER.

PERSONAGES.

THE TRUMPETER.	CŒUR-AU-VENTRE.
THE MAJOR.	MME. PISTON, vivandière.
THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.	THE BURGOMASTER.
THE ADJUTANT.	THE BURGOMISTRESS.
CORNE-DE-BŒUF.	BOURGEOIS and BOURGEOISE.
VENTERBICH.	RÉSÉDA, flower-girl.

SCENE FIRST.

Barracks of the blue dragoons. Great shady courtyard. To right and left, the quarters. It is getting dusk.

CORNE-DE-BŒUF, *addressing the Adjutant, who is walking up and down.*

Is it true what they say in barracks, adjutant?

ADJUTANT.

What is said in barracks, dragoon?

CORNE-DE-BŒUF.

They say that we have a new trumpeter.

ADJUTANT.

True.

CORNE-DE-BŒUF.

A trumpeter not like other trumpeters.

ADJUTANT.

Right.

CORNE-DE-BŒUF.

I mean that he has not the height of a blue dragoon, not even that of a man. . .

ADJUTANT.

Correct.

CORNE-DE-BŒUF.

Respectfully asking, what good will that scrap of a man be to us, adjutant?

ADJUTANT.

Not my affair.

CORNE-DE-BŒUF.

Do you know to whom we owe this treasure, adjutant?

ADJUTANT.

The colonel.

CORNE-DE-BŒUF.

And do you think, adjutant . . .

ADJUTANT.

Enough! (*Continues his walk.*)

CORNE-DE-BŒUF, *joining a group of soldiers.*

Adjutant no talker; impossible to get two words at a time out of him. — And you, Mme. Piston, do

you know anything for certain about the new trumpeter?

LA PISTON.

He came to the canteen and took two ratafias at three o'clock; witness the fact I had to let him kiss me a trifle, to keep peace.

VENTERBICH, *indignantly.*

Der teffil!

THE TRUMPETER, *suddenly appearing among them.*

Messieurs, your most obedient.

LA PISTON.

Here he is! that's he.

TRUMPETER.

Madame Piston, allow me to offer you my homage.

LA PISTON.

Is n't he nice, hey?

CORNE-DE-BŒUF.

Ah ça! young man, what region do you come from? Where is the land that grows gallants of your size?

CŒUR-AU-VENTRE.

Upon my honour, it is humiliating to the regiment.

CORNE-DE-BŒUF.

We'll put him in our pockets when there's a forced march.

TRUMPETER.

Gentlemen of the blue dragoons, I entreat you, don't fence with a butterfly; I am not strong enough to return your blows; but I've got a purse that is sufficiently well filled to offer you some ratafias before taps.

CŒUR-AU-VENTRE.

In the matter of education he seems to have the run of things.

VENTERBICH, *holding out his glass.*

Ya, not pad, der teffil!

TRUMPETER, *to the Adjutant, who comes up.*

May I venture to offer you, adjutant —

ADJUTANT.

Trumpeter, eight o'clock. Sound!

TRUMPETER, *emptying his glass.*

Ah! yes, taps . . . I forgot.

ADJUTANT.

Dragoons, fall in; sound the call, little man.

TRUMPETER, *sounding.*

Ta ra ta ta, ra ta ta. (*Agitation in the ranks.*)

ADJUTANT.

Hey! what's that?

CORNE-DE-BŒUF, *aside.*

I don't know what went down my back, a queer sort of shiver, anyhow.

CŒUR-AU-VENTRE, *aside.*

Morbleu! there's things, all sorts of things, creeping over my body.

VENTERBICH, *aside.*

Der teffil! I haf such wish to emprace Matame Biston. . . Ya, I haf so.

ADJUTANT, *aside.*

Brrrou. Not myself. Don't know what's come to me. (*Gives the word.*) Forward, march!

TRUMPETER.

Ta ra ta ta, ra ta . . .

CŒUR-AU-VENTRE, *shuddering.*

There it is again!

TRUMPETER.

Ta, ta, ra . . .

VENTERBICH, *leaving the ranks.*

Der teffil! I *must* emprace someding.

ADJUTANT, *aside.*

Feel it again, feel it again. (*The dragoons rush about the courtyard capering like kids. Mme. Piston runs away.*) (*Aloud.*) Dragoons, fall in, sacre-

bleu! Eighteen quarters of an hour in the guard-house to the first who stirs. Trumpeter, you are not to sound again.

TRUMPETER, *with an artless little air.*

Very good, adjutant. (*Wipes his trumpet. Quiet is restored. The dragoons, two and two, go up in silence to the dormitories.*)

CORNE-DE-BŒUF.

I'd give my copper aiguillettes to know what they put into our soup to-night.

SCENE SECOND.

Chamber of the MAJOR. Large bed. Weapons, Turkish pipes, tobacco-pouches.

THE MAJOR, *in bed.*

Mid-day already! How fast time goes in a night of fifteen hours! Well, no matter, I shall stay in bed a little longer to enjoy my rest and my chocolate. (*Knock at the door.*) Who's there?

THE BURGOMASTER, *outside.*

It is I, major.

MAJOR.

I'm not visible; come again.

BURGOMASTER.

Major, major, I must speak to you.

MAJOR.

I have n't got my Hungarian slippers, to go and open the door; you must speak outside.

BURGOMASTER.

The town is all fire and blood, major.

MAJOR, *springing out of bed and opening the door.*

Has the enemy got in?

BURGOMASTER.

Enemy indeed! I have come to tell you about your soldiers — fine doings, i' faith!

MAJOR, *getting into bed again.*

What about my soldiers?

BURGOMASTER.

Well, major, we citizens were all assembled last night on the esplanade, taking the air with our wives and daughters, and listening to the band. There were present the inspector of customs and his cousin the chanoinesse, the widow of the chancellor, myself, all my family, — in short, the whole élite of the bourgeoisie. Suddenly we heard the sound of a trumpet, and down came rushing on the double-quick all your blue dragoons, with a little fellow at their head, blowing his trumpet. We thought at first it was a fire in the lower town; but no; those dragoons of yours flew into the midst of us, jostling here and shoving there, knocking the chairs over, kissing our ladies,

taking our young ladies by the waist and pinching their ears, in spite of our shouts and our efforts. It was awful! In the midst of the uproar that damned trumpeter kept sounding. Ha! devil of a trumpeter! every time his trumpet rasped our ears, your dragoons got worse. There's witchcraft in it. Must I tell all? At the last blast my wife jumped up and crying out, "I can't help it!" she flung her arms round the neck of that biggest dragoon of yours, and I've come to demand justice, major.

MAJOR.

Burgomaster, the matter is very serious; — have the goodness to hand me my trousers; — very serious, burgomaster; — my boots, if you please; — mutiny of the blue dragoons, hum! hum! very important affair; give me my jacket and waistcoat, and my large sabre, with the belt and sash — and don't forget the sabretache — We will now go to the barracks and demand explanation from those brave fellows.

BURGOMASTER.

Do you think my presence necessary, dear major?

MAJOR.

Necessary? indispensable is the proper word; — you, your wife, and all who were on the esplanade with you... Here, burgomaster, take this axe and yataghan with you, — in case of insurrection.

BURGOMASTER.

But you are not taking me to a butchery, are you?

MAJOR.

Don your scarf; it may save you a thump or two.

BURGOMASTER.

Major, I 'm a father; I have a family, major.

MAJOR.

Right-about, and follow me. (*Carries him off.*)

SCENE THIRD.

The courtyard of the barracks. Soldiers drawn up in two lines. Citizens and their wives at one end.

MAJOR.

The adjutant, where 's the adjutant?

CŒUR-AU-VENTRE.

The adjutant has not yet come in, major.

MAJOR, *to the Burgomaster.*

Was he there?

BURGOMASTER.

Was he there! I should think so; ask the burgomistress. (*The burgomistress crosses herself.*)

MAJOR.

Thunder! this is more serious than I thought; I shall have to call a council of war.

BURGOMASTER, *in a low voice.*

Suppose you were to shoot one or two, as an example.

MAJOR.

Patience! I'm good-natured, I am; I shall first proceed to harangue them a bit. Blue dragoons! I have heard something very unpleasant about you, very unpleasant indeed. Monsieur here, the burgomaster, has lodged a complaint against you, and demands . . .

BURGOMASTER.

Oh! major, why put me forward?

MAJOR.

. . . And demands justice for your performances of last night; it appears that you rumpled a good many collarets and made a great scandal on the esplanade. But that is not the trouble, my friends . . .

BURGOMASTER.

Oh! major!

MAJOR.

I mean . . . in short . . . you understand. I don't say that you were entirely right; but your principal crime was violation of discipline. Now then, my children, what business had you to be out of the barracks at that hour? Have n't you leisure enough for making love? From eight in the morning till taps at night there is more than time for such childishness. . .

BURGOMASTER.

This is positively indecent!

MAJOR.

Consequently, you have violated discipline, not to speak of the rest; and I ought to proceed with the utmost severity against you. Monsieur the burgomaster, here present, advises me to have you shot... Is not that so, burgomaster?.. (*Growls among the soldiers.*)

BURGOMASTER.

Oh! major, you pervert my thought. Messieurs, I beg you to believe that the major exaggerates.

MAJOR.

I shall not go so far as that; I am good-natured, I am. We shall content ourselves by drawing lots for twenty of you, who will receive forty-eight blows with a stick on the soles of your feet. I have spoken. — Bring me a cap. Corporal, write down the names of those brave fellows.

CORNE-DE-BŒUF.

Mine too, major?

MAJOR.

Yours too, corporal.

CORNE-DE-BŒUF.

And that of the burgomaster also?

MAJOR.

And that of the . . .

BURGOMASTER.

Oh! major!

(*Enter the Adjutant dragging the Trumpeter by the ear.*)

ADJUTANT.

Here he is! the guilty one, the only guilty one.

MAJOR.

Adjutant, your sword.

ADJUTANT.

Hear me, major; this little scoundrel is the cause of it all. Taps having sounded and the soldiers in bed, I was taking off my coat when I heard, close beside me: Ta ra ra, ta ta. It was the trumpeter. I tried to stop him, but he went on: Ta ra ta ta. Then, in spite of myself, I slipped on my coat and belt, the soldiers woke, jumped up like madmen, dressed in a jiffy: Ta ra ra, ta ta. The trumpeter rushed down the staircase, and we followed, for we could n't do otherwise: Ta ra ra, ta ta. He ran into the town, ta ra! We ran into the town, ta ta! We met the ladies; we could n't help ourselves, we kissed them — and that 's how discipline was violated.

MAJOR.

What 's all this? A pretty tale you are humbugging me with!

ADJUTANT.

It is true, major; ask the rest.

MAJOR, *to the Trumpeter.*

Come here, you! What have you to say in your defence?

TRUMPETER.

On my honour, I don't know what he is talking about.

MAJOR.

Why did you get up in the night? Why did you sound the call?

TRUMPETER.

I don't remember that I did get up in the night, major, or sound the call. I must be a somnambulist. Mamma has often told me that when I was a child I used to skip about the roofs of the houses, as naked as a little Saint John.

MAJOR.

Show me that bewitched trumpet. What stamp is on it? — who is the maker?

TRUMPETER.

Why, major, it is a trumpet like any other; made in Germany; there 's not the slightest witchcraft in it. Listen: Ta ra ra, ta ta. (*Plays.*)

MAJOR, *uneasily.*

There, there, stop it! (*Agitation in the crowd.*)

TRUMPETER.

You see it is very simple: Ta ra ra, ta ta, ta, ta.

MAJOR, *beside himself.*

Saperjeu! (*Turns round and kisses the burgomistress.*)

BURGOMASTER.

Oh! major! major!

MAJOR, *coming to himself.*

Seize him, gag him, garotte him and take him to prison. (*They seize the Trumpeter.*)

TRUMPETER.

I protest against this act of brutality. (*He is carried off.*)

MAJOR, *to the dragoons.*

As for you, my friends, I pardon you, inasmuch as your escapade was not your fault.

CORNE-DE-BŒUF.

Then the bastinado . . .

MAJOR.

Oh! the bastinado will be integrally distributed; I never break my word; I am good-natured, I am. . . Are you coming with me, burgomaster?—Apropos, have you seen those two new *danseuses* at the Grand Theatre? I have a monstrous desire . . . (*They walk off talking.*)

SCENE FOURTH.

A dungeon. Grated window to right, looking on the street at the level of the ground.

THE TRUMPETER.

There's little to amuse one here: four walls that weep, one window half blind — essential lack of gayety. My dear little trumpet! happily they did not part us. I can blow into your stomach as much as I like; yes, blow — but for whom? I can't inflame those iron bars, nor make the walls embrace. — If the street were not so deserted, I might . . . Hist! some one is on the side-walk: tap! tap! . . It is a little old woman, trotting gingerly along, bag on one arm, her pug in the other; now I'll have some fun. (*Sounds his trumpet.*) Goodness! she is not agitated. (*Plays louder.*) Mercy! the old thing is deaf; the pug is the only one affected. I'm out of luck! . . What was that noise? Two little mice, kissing each other and rubbing their little whiskers together in the corner of my prison. Bless me! how amusing it is to trouble the digestion of everybody, man and beast. In the olden time I had my bow and arrows; but that's devilishly rococo now; after that they wore cuirasses, and I wasted my shots. . . I much prefer my trumpet. . . It is true that some folks are deaf. . . No matter! I love my trumpet. (*Hugs it.*)

FLOWER-GIRL, *in the street.*

Hist! hist! Mr. Prisoner.

TRUMPETER.

Who calls?

FLOWER-GIRL.

It is I, Réséda, the flower-girl.

TRUMPETER, *peeping at her through the bars.*

Pretty little phiz, i' faith! What do you want with me, Réséda, my dear Réséda?

FLOWER-GIRL.

To ask you to accept this nosegay. (*Throws him a bunch of flowers.*)

TRUMPETER.

Do you know it is charming, what you are doing, my child, Hey! am I to take it as a declaration?

FLOWER-GIRL.

Ah! fie, fie! monsieur.

TRUMPETER.

Then, why . . .

RÉSÉDA.

Every morning as I pass the prison I throw two or three bunches to those who are confined here. (*With a sigh.*) They say it brings luck.

TRUMPETER.

Are you not happy, Mademoiselle Réséda?

RÉSÉDA.

Alas! not every one accepts my flowers as kindly as you.

TRUMPETER.

Is it possible! who is he, that scamp?

RÉSÉDA.

The dragoon Venterbich, monsieur; you know him, — the one with the beautiful moustache, who is always saying, "Der teffil." I love him with all my soul, but he does n't seem to see it; and at night I am sure to find the flowers I sent him in the morning at the waist of that Piston woman.

TRUMPETER.

Venterbich is an idiot, and that 's what you get for loving such a man. There, there, don't cry; you make me unhappy, on my honour, and I 'd like to do something for you. . . I know! . . Take off your garters, my child . . . yes, your garters. That 's right. Now tie them tightly together and drop one end through my bars. The devil! they are too short! Wait a bit, I 'll climb on my table. . . Stretch your arm; all right, there! Do you know what I have hung to the end of your garters? . . . My famous trumpet, the one that made such a to-do on the esplanade. When you want Venterbich to fall into your arms, you have only to give it a little toot; and then come tell me what happens.

RÉSÉDA.

Oh! but, monsieur, I should never dare . . .

TRUMPETER.

Take it, take it, and run away as fast as you can. I hear somebody in the corridor.

SCENE FIFTH.

A battle-field. To left a mill, on a height, occupied by the enemy. In the distance, a skirmish going on in a wheat-field. A little wood to right. The blue dragoons debouch from the wood, creeping, musket in hand.

THE MAJOR.

Halt! flat on your stomachs, dragoons.

CORNE-DE-BŒUF.

That's a position that must be frightfully trying to the major.

CŒUR-AU-VENTRE.

It is very hot here.

CORNE-DE-BŒUF.

Undo a button, parbleu!

ADJUTANT.

Silence, dragoons.

AIDE-DE-CAMP, *coming from the skirmish.*

The major! quick, the major!

MAJOR, *struggling to get up.*

Here I am! State the order.

AIDE-DE-CAMP, *hat in hand.*

You have before you the enemy's headquarters, monsieur; the young prince, the marshal's wife, the royal treasure, all is there. You are allowed six minutes in which to take the mill. Adieu, monsieur. (*A ball strikes him.*) Vive le roi! (*Dies.*)

MAJOR.

Adjutant, my good friend, tell them to sound the charge.

ADJUTANT.

No trumpet; trumpeter in prison, major.

MAJOR.

But we can't take an enemy's headquarters' without a trumpet; it is not in army regulations. This is serious, very serious.

VENTERBICH.

Der teffil!

CORNE-DE-BŒUF.

Major, Venterbich has an idea.

VENTERBICH.

I haf a drumbet. (*Pulls a trumpet out of his breeches.*)

MAJOR.

Bravo! Forward, blue dragoons! Venterbich, sound the charge.

VENTERBICH.

Ah, der teffil!

MAJOR.

What is it now?

VENTERBICH.

I ton't know how to blay.

MAJOR.

Then why the devil do you carry a trumpet in your pocket? Morbleu! this position is not tenable; the plums are coming in basketsful.

CORNE-DE-BŒUF, *twirling round.*

Ouf! (*Dies.*)

MAJOR.

Ventre-saint-gris! Dragoons, which of you knows how to blow a trumpet? None! Then I 'll do it myself. Follow me! (*Puts the trumpet to his mouth and blows with all his might.*) Ta ra ra ta ta, ta ta.

VOICES IN THE RANKS.

Hi! . . Ha! . . Sapristi! Encore! (*The Major continues to blow.*)

ADJUTANT, *beside himself.*

Stop, major, stop!

(*The Major continues; the dragoons fling down their arms; they reach the mill; the enemy's fire stops; the doors of the mill open; issue the marshal's wife and her ladies of honour, skipping; they all embrace with frenzy; the Major falls exhausted and out of breath.*)

SCENE SIXTH.

Council of war. The MAJOR and the BURGOMASTER on the judges' bench. In the prisoners' dock are RÉSÉDA, VENTERBICH, and the TRUMPETER. Citizens and their wives in the background. The ADJUTANT acts as clerk.

BURGOMASTER.

Prisoner Réséda, rise, and tell us your name.

FLOWER-GIRL.

You know it, monsieur, because you have just called me by it.

BURGOMASTER.

Answer my question.

FLOWER-GIRL.

My name is Réséda, flower-girl from father to son at the corner of the market-place.

BURGOMASTER.

Clerk, write down the confession of the accused. Prisoner Venterbich, do you admit that you recognize the said Réséda, your accomplice?

VENTERBICH.

Ya, I reggonize her.

BURGOMASTER, *rubbing his hands.*

Write down that he recognizes her.

MAJOR, *in a low voice to the Burgomaster.*

Let me do the talking, dear friend; I shall get to the point quickest.

BURGOMASTER.

Unnecessary, major, I can manage it very well alone.

MAJOR.

My excellent friend, I must beg of you not to aggravate me.

BURGOMASTER, *aside.*

Brute!

MAJOR.

Now, Venterbich, I am good-natured, I am, and if you are frank with me I'll guarantee that you shall get off with a sound bastinado. Attention! From whom did you get the trumpet you had in your pocket?

VENTERBICH.

From dat little flower-girl.

MAJOR.

Why did she give it to you? Trumpets are not, so far as I know, love-tokens.

VENTERBICH.

She haf said dat it serfed her to get lofed, py plowing it.

RÉSÉDA, *weeping.*

That is the pure truth, major; I gave the instrument to Venterbich; I give him all I have.

MAJOR.

And you, my dear, from whom did you get the trumpet?

RÉSEDA.

From this little man, here.

MAJOR, *to the Trumpeter.*

What have you to say to that, young man?

BURGOMASTER.

He 's asleep, the rascal. (*Laughter through the hall. The Adjutant pulls the Trumpeter's ears.*)

TRUMPETER, *waking up.*

Messieurs et mesdames, how have you passed the night? Well, I hope? and I the same; only my head is a little heavy. . .

ADJUTANT.

Silence!

TRUMPETER.

Beg pardon, I forgot.

MAJOR.

Prisoner, get up.

TRUMPETER.

I am up, major.

MAJOR.

Nobody would suppose it; get up on a bench, then. — What was your object in giving a trumpet to this young woman?

TRUMPETER.

I wanted to thank her for her touching kindness, and her flowers. You understand, my dear major, it never occurred to me that she would give my trumpet to Venterbich, that Venterbich would transmit it to you, and that you —

MAJOR, *getting red.*

Very good! that will do! no use analyzing — From whom did you obtain that diabolical trumpet?

TRUMPETER.

To tell you the truth, major, I was born with it slung to my back with a pink string; I ought to tell you that we lived just opposite to some barracks; and no doubt mamma had a glance, as they say, from one of those messieurs, and it is safe to suppose he was a trumpeter.

BURGOMASTER.

I shall venture to remark to his Excellency the major that there is witchcraft in this affair, and that it properly belongs to the ecclesiastical power.

VOICES IN THE CROWD.

Yes, yes, he 's a witch! burn him! burn him! drown him!

TRUMPETER, *indignantly.*

The idea! What savages!

MAJOR.

I shall slit the nose and ears of the first fool who speaks again. The prisoner forms part of my command; and his affair concerns none but me. . . Prisoner, before the deliberations on your case begin, you are granted five minutes by this court to defend yourself, if you can.

TRUMPETER.

On my honour and conscience, major and judge, I declare that I have nothing to reproach myself with, and I swear that if my trumpet has affected your nerves it is not my fault. I am innocent and mild as a new-born babe. That stated, I throw myself on the mercy of my judges, begging them to remark that I have not caused great misfortunes, and that if my trumpet is, as they say, bewitched, it is a very inoffensive witchery. I made a little racket in the town, which needed it; I caused a few kisses to the ladies, who were not displeased; and I spent five days in a dungeon myself; that is all. As for the unfortunate accident of the battle, I had nothing to do with that, and if peace was made without the help of a congress and diplomats you must lay the blame on my trumpet — which I hereby deliver up to your wrath. I have spoken. (*Bows gallantly to the assembly.*)

MAJOR.

This court will now deliberate. (*After five minutes' deliberation, the Major resumes.*)

Whereas, etc., and whereas, etc., etc., the flower-

girl Réséda is acquitted; the dragoon Venterbich is sentenced to marry her; and the trumpeter is condemned to be shot within twenty-four hours. The trumpet of the said trumpeter will be placed under a glass globe, and kept on exhibition in the museum of this town, — a safe place. (*Frantic applause.*)

VENTERBICH.

Der teffil! (*Réséda falls upon his neck.*)

TRUMPETER, *looking sadly at her.*

How unkind and selfish happiness makes us! Réséda is happy, and the poor prisoners will get no more flowers.

SCENE SEVENTH.

The public square at six in the morning. A few citizens and their wives are awaiting the arrival of the condemned man.

A CITIZEN.

What o'clock is it, Dame Gertrude?

SHE.

A quarter to six, neighbour.

HE.

It is an indignity to shoot men so early in the day; I should like to know why? Just for nothing but to interfere with the pleasures of the people.

SHE.

Just so; that's a great truth you are saying, neighbour; two hours later I could have brought my children; poor dears, they have little enjoyment as it is; they need n't have been deprived of this.

HE.

The execution is ordered at six precisely, I believe.

SHE.

Yes! and I hear the drums already. Here they come! here they are! There's the adjutant and ten dragoons — handsome man that adjutant. . . I don't see any priests.

HE.

Up to the last moment the little wretch refused to see one.

SHE.

Holy Virgin! then he's a Voltairean?

HE.

Through and through; knows neither God nor devil.

SHE.

Perhaps he is Antichrist.

HE.

Oh! no, no! Antichrist would n't be as small as that.

ADJUTANT.

Ground — arms!

TRUMPETER.

Have I still a few minutes, adjutant?

ADJUTANT.

Eighty-one seconds.

TRUMPETER.

Am I permitted to address a few words to these bumpkins?

ADJUTANT.

No.

TRUMPETER.

That's a pity!.. Never mind... But it is hard to die so young without a little speech at the last. (*They blindfold him.*) A bandage! I know all about that; except that I put mine on one eye only... I ought to tell you that once upon a time I was blind of one eye.

ADJUTANT.

Eight seconds.

TRUMPETER.

Oh, dear me! and I had so many things to say to you. Blue dragoons, I bequeath you my blessing. (*Takes off his jacket and turns up his sleeves.*)

DAME GERTRUDE.

Goodness! what a white skin he has!

ADJUTANT.

Take aim . . . fire! (*Shouts from the crowd; report of musketry; smoke.*)

TRUMPETER, *still standing.*

Blue dragoons, I wish you all sorts of pleasure; I am not to be killed as easily as that; I am . . .
CUPID. (*With that and a pirouette he disappears.*)

THE EIGHT MRS. BLUE-BEARDS.

A MORAL DRAMA.

THE

EIGHT MRS. BLUE-BEARDS.

A MORAL DRAMA.

PERSONAGES.

COUNT BLUE-BEARD ÆT. 70.
EVELINA, HIS WIFE, ÆT. 15.
SISTER ANNE.
THE SEVEN HANGED WIVES.
A PAGE.

SCENE FIRST.

BLUE-BEARD'S castle. Room very lofty and very dark. Above the mantel a brass crucifix. Gloomy tapestries. Trophies suspended to the walls. Nine o'clock in the evening.

BLUE-BEARD.

(He walks up and down with an absorbed air; then suddenly stops before the crucifix and bares his head.)

MY God, I thank thee for the joy that thou hast given to my old age in placing beside me such sweet and graceful company. The presence of this new spouse will brighten my hearth, and suffice — so beauteous is my Evelina — to fill with gayety and love this mournful house, desolate as a ruin,

and this heart more mournful, more desolate than all. My God, thou knowest what an excellent husband I can be, and what treasures of affection lie hidden within me. Thou knowest that I struggled with all my might before I yielded to the cruel exigencies of my fate. Seven times hast thou seen the bloody sweat bedew my brow; seven times my tears have flowed and my poor hands trembled as I strangled those beautiful creatures. O Lord! O Lord! hast thou pardoned me? May I consider as a pledge of mercy the marriage I contract to-day with my dear Evelina? If it be so, my God, I swear before that crucifix that my lips shall not touch so much as a hair of my wife's head until I return from the sacred city, whither I will go to absolve me of my crimes by the hand of thy Vicar. — I have said it. (*Puts on his hat, and strikes a gong.*) Holà, Sister Anne! (*Enter Sister Anne.*)

SISTER ANNE.

I am here, brother.

BLUE-BEARD.

Polish my cuirass, and see to the straps of my armour. I start at once.

SISTER ANNE.

Yes, brother.

BLUE-BEARD.

You are cold and tranquil as the water in my fishpond. Does nothing surprise you in this sudden departure?

SISTER ANNE.

No, brother.

BLUE-BEARD.

Do you think it natural that a husband should depart on his wedding-night?

SISTER ANNE.

You are the master, brother; I am not the kind to scratch myself where I don't itch.

BLUE-BEARD.

Well said, Sister Anne. Come here now, that I may open my heart to you. You entered my house this morning with your sister Evelina, and already you have pleased me, as much by your vices as your virtues. You are tall, lean, and bony, — very ugly to boot; you have all the befitting qualities for a duenna and an elder sister; you resemble immensely that Cousin Bette whom M. de Balzac has told us about.

SISTER ANNE.

You flatter me, brother.

BLUE-BEARD.

You suit me to a T, and I shall give you a proof of my regard by leaving to you the management of the castle during my absence; you will keep an eye on the jam pots and you will watch the behaviour of my wife; on my return you will render me, in writing, an exact account of every-

thing. Approach me now, and kiss my hand. Adieu, Sister Anne.

SISTER ANNE.

Adieu, brother. (*Sister Anne goes out to left; Blue-Beard lights a candelabrum and goes out to right.*)

SCENE SECOND.

The chamber of EVELINA. A little bed with white curtains. A prie-dieu.

EVELINA, *half-dressed, is braiding her hair before a mirror.*

To think that I 'm a lady! a very great lady! and yet it took so little to do it! Monsieur l'abbé gave the blessing, Monsieur le comte a kiss and a ring, and Monsieur the cook a good dinner, and there it was, done! I 'd be willing to marry every day if they wanted me to. That poor Blue-Beard! He is very old and very ugly; but he talks well, and he has such a soft voice and he looks at me so kindly that I 'm quite inclined to love him with all my heart. . . Oh! this devilish hair won't hold up! There now! The fact is, I look very pretty to-night! (*Some one raps.*) Ah! good heavens!

BLUE-BEARD, *outside.*

Evelina, dear Evelina, open the door to me.

EVELINA, *opening it.*

Enter, monseigneur.

BLUE-BEARD.

Were you saying your prayers, my pretty one? Forgive me for disturbing your sacred meditations. Will it please you that we pray together?

EVELINA.

With all my heart, monseigneur.

BLUE-BEARD.

Where were you?

EVELINA.

I was just beginning my *Pater* when you rapped.

BLUE-BEARD.

Then begin it now, and may Heaven hear you. (*They kneel down.*)

EVELINA.

Pater noster qui es in cœlis. . .

BLUE-BEARD.

Sanctificetur nomen tuum. . .

EVELINA, *interrupting her prayer.*

Apropos, monseigneur, why do they call you Blue-Beard? You have n't a single hair in your beard that is n't as white as snow.

BLUE-BEARD, *displeased.*

Adveniat regnum tuum, fiat voluntas tua.

EVELINA, *ending the Pater.*

Libera nos à malo. Amen.

BLUE-BEARD.

You must know, my child, that if my beard is white, it is sorrow that has whitened it.

EVELINA, *still on her knees, creeps nearer to him.*

Tell me your sorrows, monseigneur, that I may try to console you.

BLUE-BEARD.

Later, later.

EVELINA.

And tell me, monseigneur, what is that great uninhabited turret I see dimly at the farther end of the courtyard?

BLUE-BEARD, *annoyed.*

Go on to the *Ave Maria.*

EVELINA.

Ave Maria, gratia... But you will tell me later, won't you?

BLUE-BEARD.

Dominus tecum... (*Seven loud, lugubrious cries are heard seven times from the other end of the courtyard.*)

EVELINA, *rising terrified.*

Holy Virgin! what is that?

BLUE-BEARD, *very pale.*

Nothing, my child, nothing. The spirit of evil lives over there in that wing of the castle, and he walks about, howling, at night; that is all.

EVELINA.

Oh! I'm afraid!

BLUE-BEARD.

Fear not; I start to-night for Rome; I go to beg our holy father, the Pope, to exorcise this malignant influence and rid us of so turbulent a visitor.

EVELINA.

What! you leave me alone?

BLUE-BEARD.

You will have your Sister Anne and my young page to guard you.

EVELINA.

Kiss me, then; and may the Holy Virgin keep you.

BLUE-BEARD.

I cannot kiss you.

EVELINA.

Indeed! why not?

BLUE-BEARD, *taking her hands.*

I must beg you to remark, Evelina, that you have now asked me your tenth question within five

minutes. Take more care not to be curious; that is a defect which leads to great lengths. Adieu, my wife; be good and virtuous till I return.

(*Goes out.*)

SCENE THIRD.

The turret. A salon hung with blue. The wind blows in through the windows, mostly broken. Around the room seven women are hanging to long nails.

FIRST HANGED WIFE.

Do you know the great news, mesdames? Blue-Beard has married again!

CHORUS OF HANGED WIVES.

Who told you that, great God?

FIRST HANGED WIFE.

The bells of the chapel told me this morning.

SECOND HANGED WIFE.

Well! so much the better! — one more of us!

FIRST HANGED WIFE.

Bah! what makes you think she will have the same fate as the rest of us? Besides, under what pretext could that savage Blue-Beard get rid of her? As for us, it is conceivable . . . but this is a mere child. . .

SECOND HANGED WIFE.

How do you know that?

FIRST HANGED WIFE.

From my nail I could see her just now, taking off her clothes in her bedroom... She isn't fifteen; long hair like a mantle, and such innocence! ..

SECOND HANGED WIFE.

Tut! tut! tut! You and your innocence! as if there were n't other sins in the world than the seven capital ones, or other sinners than we seven.

SEVENTH HANGED WIFE.

Besides, it is so easy to displease that Blue-Beard. As for me, the old monster killed me because I was too fond of sleeping. He said to me one morning, "You are slothful," and thereupon he smothered me.

FIRST HANGED WIFE.

My crime was that I had my letters addressed to Madame de Blue-Beard, instead of just Blue-Beard; that horrible man slipped a rope round my neck calling out: "Pride! you are proud; get out of here!"

SIXTH HANGED WIFE.

As for me, I was too fond of the silver crowns. Monseigneur called me into his study one day. "I know you," he said; "your name is Avarice!" And crack! ..

FIFTH HANGED WIFE.

Same thing happened to me for a few miserable pots of jam I took from the storeroom.

FOURTH HANGED WIFE.

And I got as much for letting a soldier tie my garter.

THIRD HANGED WIFE.

And all I did was, in a moment of vivacity, to box my Sister Anne's ears.

FIRST HANGED WIFE.

Bless me! did you have a Sister Anne, too? So did I...

CHORUS OF ALL THE HANGED WIVES.

And I... and I... etc.

FIRST HANGED WIFE.

Alas! all pretty women have a Sister Anne about them to serve as duenna; and it is always Sister Anne who ruins them.

SECOND HANGED WIFE.

Well, my dear ladies, I return to my original idea, and I'll bet my nail against yours that two days hence the new bride will join us. We seven make a tolerably pretty assortment of vices, but it is not complete; there's one pearl lacking to the casket...

CHORUS OF HANGED WIVES.

Which? which?

SECOND HANGED WIFE.

Our collection does not include the king of female vices; a vice which ruins, has ruined, will

ruin so many women; a vice which sums up and contains all others. . .

CHORUS OF HANGED WIVES.

But which? what?

SECOND HANGED WIFE.

Hist! some one is walking in the corridor.

CHORUS OF HANGED WIVES.

No! it's the wind. . . No! it's a bat!

SECOND HANGED WIFE.

Well! this terrible vice . . . is . . . CURIOSITY . . . and here it comes! (*The key turns in the lock. The door half opens. Evelina stoops forward and casts a quick glance into the room. She holds a small lamp in her hand.*)

SCENE FOURTH.

EVELINA'S chamber.

EVELINA, *in bed.*

Goodness! what a dreadful night I have spent! yes, an awful night! That feeling my way along those dark passages! those horrid night-birds whose wings slapped my face! that odious lamp which would go out every minute! And then the great carved door, and the dark salon, so immense, and the seven nails! . . B-r-r-r! I'm shuddering still. What a wicked man that Blue-Beard is!

Seven women all to himself! why, it is frightful! . . Of course I know those ladies up there were no better than they should be, and that I, I've nothing to fear, for I have none of their monstrous vices. . . (*Some one raps.*) Who's there?

SISTER ANNE.

It is I, sister. . . (*She enters.*) Mercy! still in bed, and past mid-day! Why, this is shocking. . . You who used always to be up at day-break!

EVELINA, *looking at the clock.*

Bless me! I must have needed a lot of sleep.

SISTER ANNE.

Here's your coffee, sister.

EVELINA.

Very well. . . Pugh! all chicory! Holà, hey, Sister Anne! Sister Anne!

SISTER ANNE, *running in.*

What's the matter?

EVELINA.

Who made me this horrid stuff? It is detestable, your coffee; and you can go and give it to the rabbits, if you like.

SISTER ANNE.

I made it as I always do: coffee, sugar, and the rest.

EVELINA.

Put me three more lumps of sugar.

SISTER ANNE.

What's that? . . three more lumps! . .

EVELINA.

Yes . . . don't you hear me, you great giraffe?

SISTER ANNE.

Giraffe! I!

EVELINA.

Yes, you. Give me the sugar-basin. (*She upsets the sugar-basin and breaks it.*)

SISTER ANNE, *in a low tone, picking up the pieces.*

It is my opinion that something will happen in this house.

EVELINA.

Tell me, Sister Anne, where did you get that pretty gown?

SISTER ANNE.

Why, sister, it is the one you wore so long and said you did not want any more.

EVELINA.

I did not want it yesterday, but I like it to-day. Be so good as to take it off and give it back to me.

SISTER ANNE, *as she is about to leave the room.*

Old Clopinet is in the antechamber, and wants his weekly stipend.

EVELINA.

Go to the devil, you and your Clopinet! I have n't money myself to share it with all the old beggars in the neighbourhood. Apropos, who is that fair-haired boy who was playing the bones under my window just now?

SISTER ANNE.

That is monseigneur's page.

EVELINA.

Tell him to come up; he is nice. (*At a sign from Sister Anne the page enters.*) Come here, my pretty lad. How old are you?

THE PAGE.

Fifteen years and two months, madame.

EVELINA.

Come closer, and let me look at you. . . closer, closer! . . Oh, what blue eyes! What makes you colour up like that? . . His skin is almost as delicate as mine . . . Sister Anne, go and see where my white hen is. (*Sister Anne goes out.*) Hey! hey! little page!

THE PAGE, *drawing back.*

Oh! madame! . .

SCENE FIFTH.

Same apartment as in the first tableau. BLUE-BEARD in a great arm-chair. SISTER ANNE standing behind him. EVELINA kneeling at his feet.

BLUE-BEARD.

Was I not unhappy enough?

EVELINA, *sobbing.*

Alas!

BLUE-BEARD.

The last is the guiltiest of all.

EVELINA.

Alas!

BLUE-BEARD.

The others at least had but one vice at a time; this one has all. But defend yourself, defend yourself, unhappy girl... Tell me that Sister Anne has lied, and I'll wring the throat of that Megæra.

EVELINA.

Alas!

BLUE-BEARD, *reading aloud Sister Anne's report.*

"Stayed in bed till mid-day: Sloth.
"Three lumps of sugar in her coffee: Gluttony.
"Refused his stipend to old Clopinet: Avarice.
"Private interview with the page: Wantonness."

And pride, envy, anger, they are all here. How can it be?—you whom I thought so pious, so virtuous!

EVELINA.

Alas! my kind seigneur, you warned me yourself. Curiosity leads far; it led me to the blue salon, and the moment my key turned the lock of the door I felt as corrupted as a company of dragoons.

BLUE-BEARD.

Yes, the most virtuous of women are ruined in that way. One turn of a key suffices. But now, my child, what must I decide upon?

EVELINA.

Kill me, monsieur; for, as I told you, I feel I am terribly wicked.

BLUE-BEARD, *sobbing.*

Prepare yourself, then, my poor Evelina! Sister Anne, go and fetch me a nail, a hammer, and a rope.

SISTER ANNE, *pulling them all from her pocket.*

Here they are, brother.

BLUE-BEARD, *passing the rope round his wife's neck.*

Oh! my God! I am indeed to be pitied.

EVELINA.

Aië! (*She dies.*)

BLUE-BEARD, *dragging away the body.*

Sister Anne, you need not go up in the turret; it is entirely useless; you'll see nothing, for nothing is coming. This is a serious drama in which we are acting, and there is nothing of tradition about it... That's eight! (*Turning to my feminine readers.*) Warning to ladies.

A COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION FOR CHARENTON.

A COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION FOR CHARENTON.

SCENE FIRST.

The great courtyard of the lunatic asylum. At the farther end a stone bench. The LUNATICS are walking and talking under the horse-chestnut trees. The director's clock strikes two.

A LUNATIC, *coming from within.*

MY friends, my dear friends, I bring you sad news: our poor Ladislas is cured and leaves the establishment.

THE LUNATICS, *rushing up.*

Ladislas cured! Is it possible?

LUNATIC.

Yes, messieurs, Ladislas is cured in the most complete manner; hopelessly cured, without possibility of relapse; you see me in tears! He was such a fine cracked-brain! As late as yesterday, there he was in this very courtyard, raving like any one, gabbling like all of you put together, sticking out his tongue at the keepers, sometimes on all fours, sometimes with his legs in the air, to-day as merry as a wedding, to-morrow more gloomy than

a funeral. Oh! the queer twists and contortions! oh! the jolly faces he could make! and what a droll fish he was! Don't you remember that night when they had to get him down from the top of the tallest tree? — and when he wanted to catch a bear to make pomatum for that horrid red hair of his? — and that famous week when, for four days and very seriously, he thought he was one of Cardinal Mazarin's nieces? Oh! the drollery of his begging us, with blushes, not to look at him as he took off his trousers; and what a box on the ear he gave to that ill-mannered keeper who had the indiscretion to look into his amorous correspondence with Louis XIV.! (*Laughter among the crowd.*) And to think that now we have lost him! and forever! Poor Ladislas! poor Ladislas!

THE LUNATICS, *in lugubrious tones.*

Poor Ladislas!

LUNATIC.

At this moment he is no longer one of us; the doctors have signed his release, and the Director has ordered the driver to take him back to his family. He is about to return into serious and reasonable life. Farewell to the sweet idleness he had with us! Farewell to the fresh bread and the iron bedsteads! Farewell to this dear retreat with whitened walls, where we dream at liberty, nose to the sky, and hands in our pockets! Farewell to these beautiful gardens of fancy where we stray as we please amid the moss-roses and lilies! Farewell the gambols, the life of joyous sloth, the

honest laughs, and the nice sadness! They have cut his wings, poor angel, and poof! there he is down in the real world of the halt and the blind! Ladislas is dead! Ladislas is dead! (*Sings.*) "No more shall we go to the woods; the laurels are all cut down."—Adieu, poor Ladislas!

THE LUNATICS, *sobbing.*

Ladislas is dead! Adieu, Ladislas!

(*Ladislas passes through the courtyard, embarrassed, his head bent down. He walks between two keepers, who politely escort him to the gates of the asylum.*)

SCENE SECOND.

LUNATIC, *with a very lively air.*

Now, then, messieurs, don't think that all stops here, and that I shall let you busy yourselves with your pleasures and attend to your amusements. Not a bit of it! we've got other flies to catch. Open your ears and shut your mouths; I am going to speak. (*To a madman who bites him.*) My dear Toby, abstain from putting your fangs into my epidermis — charming fancy, I admit, but inconvenient to an orator. Now then, Seigneurs of Charenton, who shall be the new tenant of Ladislas' empty cell?

THE LUNATICS.

Goodness! that's true; Ladislas' empty cell.

members of this Court discernment and severity. As for you, candidates, be clear and brief; do not stammer in speaking, and try not to put your fingers in your nose, as is commonly done at examinations. — Advance, young man, and state your claims for admission.

THE LOVER, *advancing.*

I am in love, monsieur. (*General hilarity.*)

JUDGE, *smiling.*

Give some details to this Court.

LOVER.

I am in love with a woman to whom I have never spoken, and to whom I doubtless never shall speak in all my life. I have seen her only once, at the window of a carriage in a train that passed the express train in which I was, and since then I have been mad about her. (*Marks of sympathy from the public.*) I pass my days in thinking about her, and my nights in dreaming of her; I can no longer work, and I have fallen into frightful poverty. I had a habit of weeping constantly; but even that poor consolation is taken from me; the neighbours on both sides, inquisitive or kindly persons, are always rapping at my door to ask what is my sorrow and to calm it. Sometimes I open my window to quench with nocturnal breezes the fire of my love; then my opposite neighbour, with the eyes of a lynx, orders me to close it. When I walk the streets, pale and despairing, the police follow

after me, afraid I shall do some harm. I have transports of joy or grief which disturb the solemnity or the tranquillity of the place where I happen to be; in short, the world annoys me and I annoy the world. Here, at least I shall be sure of food and a bed. I can weep, shout, howl, rend my breast, tear out my hair, roll on the ground, with no one to prevent me; I can dream without being disturbed, and mourn without being comforted. (*He weeps, and everybody weeps.*)

JUDGE, *wiping his eyes.*

Go, unfortunate young man; your case is heard; the Court will decide upon it. (*To the Capitalist, who tries to speak.*) My dear friend, if you persist I shall have you gagged.

THE POET, *advancing.*

Sokrates says that every man
Ab ovo carries in his brain
Of madness just a little grain;
And I must say, reflecting on it,
That coming from a pagan pundit
  The maxim 's rather pretty.

For my part I have often sought
  To know what hidden demon
Within my head such mischief wrought,
  And torture to my cranium.
But now the sage has cleared my brain,
I know at least mine unknown pain,
  And 't is a Greek reveals it.

THE LUNATICS.

What does he say? What does he say?

THE VICEROY OF INDIA.

In the name of the god Vishnu, silence, ye people!

THE POET.

You see in me, messieurs, a great poet, the author of "Songs of Madmen," in which I prove that —

Raphael, Rembrandt, Dante,
And Marl'bro of Malplaquet,
Great artists,
Writers,
Fighters, —
They all have been divinely mad,
And all have worn the jacket.

THE JUDGE.

A poet! One of those men who spend their lives in finding syllables that have the same consonance, lines that have a certain number of words, and words that have a fixed number of letters. That's it, is n't it? Good, very good! A maggot in the brain. Have you any other claims to the sympathy of this Court?

THE POET.

What shall I say to this honourable assemblage? I believe that, more than all other beings in the world, I was born for Charenton: eccentric in ideas and acts, my existence in no respect resembles that of the vulgar herd; all my life I have ridden astride of a chimæra, a blue-bird in each pocket; I roam the streets grimacing, gesticulating, com-

posing. I have attacks of epilepsy or enthusiasm at all hours of the day. Social relations are intolerable to me. I dream of the stars (which is your way, too); I talk to myself, and very loud (like you again); my trousers are in holes, my resources gone; people point their fingers at me, and speak to me with a smile of satirical pity. The best of them call me insane; but I don't care for that; one title is as good as another.

I 've no false pride, not I,
For nobody can deny
I wear my fool's cap boldly,
And say, with honest pride,
Whatever may betide,
A fool of genius am I.

I demand a cell! (*Applause from the crowd.*)

THE RIVER OF THE AMAZONS.

From my source to my mouths, along my current or upon my banks, never have I seen a —

THE JUDGE.

The other candidates will present themselves, (*To the Viceroy, pointing out to him the Capitalist.*) Will your Majesty take charge of that man and make him hold his tongue? — Now then, messieurs ... Who are you, my little friend?

THE MUSICIAN, *humming.*

La fa ré mi la si do ré, I am devoted to music, *si si ut mi*, they prevent me from singing, *mi sol ut*, from singing, and as it is a habit, *do ré fa si*,

I have acquired, *la la si si ut ut ré ré*, I take refuge with you, *sol sol do do.* — Do you know my grand sonata in *la?* I'll tell it to you: Broum, broum, froum! (*Universal laughter.*)

THE JUDGE, *to the Court.*

This is a very sad case.

THE CUCKOO.

Within bird memory, cuckoo! cuckoo! never have I known, cuckoo! cuckoo! its like, cuck-oo!

THE SAVANT, *advancing.*

I, monsieur, concern myself with science.

THE JUDGE.

A learned man? very good; I congratulate you, my good sir; you have a proud lot of cracked-brains in your business. I've been told of a learned man who spent thirty years of his life in a pair of scales in order to know the laws of ponderation. Are you of his persuasion?

THE SAVANT.

I am a great chemist, crowned by all the Academies; I spend my nights and days bending over retorts and crucibles; four times I have burned my face, ten times I have singed my hair, I set fire to my house daily, and regularly; my family, my friends, and the police are opposed to my experiments on account of a little harmless

absent-mindedness that characterizes me; and so I have come here in search of a life of independence and a laboratory. (*The Lunatics gaze at him in terror.*)

THE DUC DE GUISE.

By my Scar! messeigneurs of France, this is a dangerous man, and I pro —

THE JUDGE, *not listening to him.*

Enough, learned man! retire. — Here comes, messieurs, a new candidate, who appears to me to deserve our most serious attention. — What a singular being! — limbs twitching, gestures jerking, all of a piece, neck stiff; he looks like a wooden man with springs inside of him: crack! . . he opens his mouth! crack! . . he lifts his arm! He is going to speak; attention!

THE BROKER, *in a head voice, arm extended.*

Thirty-five Strasburg! . . Twenty-two Orléans! . . Who wants Strasburg, burg, burg, burg? . . (*The Lunatics shake their heads with an air of pity.*)

THE JUDGE, *aside.*

Don't contradict him, he might be malicious. (*Aloud.*) Yes, my friend, Strasburg, burg, burg. I understand, I understand; but let us talk sense for a moment. You want to reside at Charenton, don't you? They interfere outside with your habits, hey?

THE BROKER, *pulling out his note-book.*

Who wants Mulhausen? . . 32 40. . . premium, extension, extension, premium, premium, premium. . .

THE JUDGE.

Yes, no doubt, no doubt; but we want to know whether —

THE BROKER.

Whether my securities are safe? Excellent, my dear fellow, excellent. . . Take my Strasburgs.

THE JUDGE.

Impossible to get a word out of him; take him away, and have him watched.

THE ANTICHRIST.

And I say to you, *amen, amen, dico vobis,* I believe he —

THE JUDGE, *paying no heed to him.*

And you, monsieur, what is your malady. . . oh! pardon me, your profession?

THE SUCCESSFUL MAN.

I am forty years old, I have a name and position in the world, two foreign orders on my breast, the *entrée* everywhere. In short, I am what is called a *successful man.* To obtain that title you have no conception of the privations I imposed upon myself, the friends I sacrificed, the joys I forbade myself to have. For twenty years I have

not been my own master for a single hour. Always a false grin on my teeth, always an air to order, a bent backbone, lips closed, heart and face also. I'm the Man of the Iron Mask of the nineteenth century, the martyr of social conventions and my own ambition. I'm a *successful man* — successful in what? in regretting a youth I never used, the happy years I have lost, the generous red blood that I myself have allowed to rot in my veins! — To-day my mask oppresses me, my curb galls me; all human follies, love, passion, youth, the need of shouting without a cause, skipping without a reason, — all, all have gone to my brain... If I let myself go to one of my transports of hot fever before society, society, astonished, will push me out and send me to Charenton. I prefer to come here of my own accord. Come, messieurs, provide a cell for a *successful man!* A cell!! a cell!!! No more constraint! No more repression! No more iron mask! No anything! — Come, a skip! Come, come, a caper! Hurrah for gayety! Houp la la, la la, la la! (*He dances and shouts. General dancing and capering of the Lunatics, the Judge, the Court and the Candidates.*)

THE JUDGE, *cutting a pigeon-wing.*

Let us be serious, my friends, let us be serious... Hey! what's become of my Court? Gone! There's the Cuckoo up a tree, singing his shrillest!.. Bless me! and there's the River of the Amazons walking gravely along with a paper

boat on the top of his head! Poor fellows! so crazy! . . Well, never mind, I resume the session —Take your places! take your places! (*The Lunatics return, the Viceroy of India brings in the Capitalist.*)

THE CAPITALIST, *choking with anger.*

At last, I shall speak!

THE LUNATICS.

Oh, la, la! What a queer head! What a majestic, stupid air! And his nose! and those green spectacles! and that blue coat! Oh, and see how he blows his nose, and takes snuff. (*They writhe with laughter.*)

THE CAPITALIST.

In the name of public liberty, I protest against the foul jests to which I am exposed, and the violences that are being done to me.

THE LUNATICS.

Bravo! bravo! He 's fine! he is, he 's fine!

THE CAPITALIST, *to the Judge.*

You, monsieur, who seem to me the most reasonable person here—

THE JUDGE.

What is all this about, my friend? You want a cell, don't you?

THE CAPITALIST.

Heavens and earth! I am not a madman, and I don't desire to be. I went to the parlour to speak to the manager, who is a friend of mine, and while I was waiting one of these gentlemen came and told me I was wanted. I supposed I had to do with a serious person. I followed him, and I found, too late, that I had fallen into the hands of lunatics. (*Howls of rage from the crowd.*)

THE JUDGE, *in a curt tone.*

Be informed, man, that there is not a single lunatic here; you are among idealists. The devil! don't let me hear you talk of lunatics, or I 'll have you halberded by the Duc de Guise.

THE CAPITALIST, *frightened.*

But really, messieurs, what do you want to do with me? My name is Timoléon; I am an honest man of small property, living in the rue Saint-Denis. I get up at eight o'clock and go to bed at ten. After breakfast I go and hear the cannon fired in the Palais-Royal, and watch the children play. I am an elector. In the evening I play dominoes with the assistant-mayor. You see I have not a single symptom of madness in me. (*To a lunatic.*) Stop pulling my hair, monsieur; it is a wig, and you 'll have it off. I request that I be set at liberty, or I 'll call for help.

THE JUDGE.

My friends, make sure of this poor devil, and bind him tight while the Court deliberates.

THE CAPITALIST, *terrified.*

But this joke is in the very worst taste... You are attacking the most sacred rights of man... Messieurs, I am a father... Messieurs, my wife will be expecting me!.. Help! help!

THE JUDGE.

Gag him, somebody.

THE CAPITALIST, *half choked.*

Help! hel...

THE JUDGE.

Now, residents of Charenton, and you, postulants, listen to the decision of the Court: —

Article I. The manias of love, money, art, and ambition being special maladies, and very grave ones, the application of the following named candidates, to wit: lover, poet, musician, broker, successful man, and savant, intercourse with whom is dangerous, is hereby denied, and the applicants will be returned to their homes. Charenton receives hobbyists and idealists, but the place of real lunatics is outside.

THE LUNATICS.

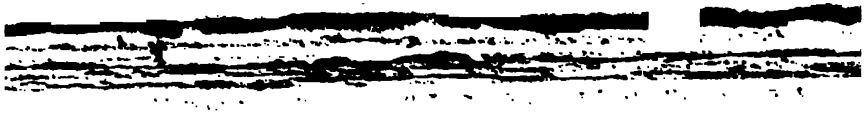
Bravo!

THE JUDGE.

Article II. Monsieur Timoléon, described as a man of small property, appearing, in our judgment, to be seriously attacked with mania, but of a mild and inoffensive form, commonly called

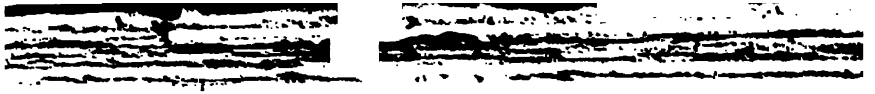
cretinism, will be borne in triumph to the cell of the late Ladislas, which we decree to be his by right. He is one of the most pronounced cases of paresis that I have ever seen. . . *Dixi!*

(*Howls, and stampings of joy. The rejected candidates walk sadly away. The lunatics bear off the unfortunate Timoléon in triumph to the cell of the late Ladislas. The Judge turns a summerset over the Court bench. Shouts, gambols, capers, tableau.*)



THE NIGHTINGALES OF THE CEMETERY.

FANTASY IN MOURNING.



THE NIGHTINGALES OF THE CEMETERY.

FANTASY IN MOURNING.

PERSONAGES.

THE NIGHTINGALES OF THE CEMETERY.
A NIGHTINGALE OF THE WOODS.
CHILDREN.
CITIZENS.
LOVERS.
UNDERTAKERS.
MARCHANDE DE PLAISIRS (PROCURESS.)

SCENE FIRST.

The cemetery of Montparnasse. Day is dawning. The dead are sleeping. The NIGHTINGALES OF THE CEMETERY are softly singing. A NIGHTINGALE OF THE WOODS replies from a tree upon the boulevard.

NIGHTINGALE OF THE WOODS.

NIGHTINGALES, my brothers, what the devil makes you sing in this great, gloomy garden?

THE NIGHTINGALES.

Nightingale, our brother, this great, gloomy garden is the garden of the dead.

THE NIGHTINGALE.

Nightingales, my brethren, where find you songs so sweet and so disconsolate? You are birds like me, and yet our voices are not alike; the ring of mine is far more clear and resonant. Listen to this trill... Yours, it is true, possesses something veiled, mysterious, which agitates and charms. What sort of nightingales are you, my brothers, and why that crape around your throats?

THE NIGHTINGALES.

Bird of the woods, a truce to your trills and your satire; we sing as it suits us to sing, and we beg you to carry your mirth and your resonant singing elsewhere; you make too much noise in this garden.

NIGHTINGALE.

Why? are there sick folk in it?

THE NIGHTINGALES.

No, only persons asleep.

NIGHTINGALE.

In that case, adieu; but promise me this: come and breakfast some morning in the woods of Ville d'Avray; 't is there that I perch.

THE NIGHTINGALES.

Thanks, thanks! but we never put beak out of here.

NIGHTINGALE.

What! you never fly roaming the woods? Do you spend your whole life in this solemn inclosure,

'mid these trees in deep mourning and Nature dejected? Oh! how I pity you!

THE NIGHTINGALES.

Do not pity us, friend; we are happy, most happy. God gave us a voice that is loving and tender, and we use it in pious ways. Nightingales of the cemetery are we; and as such we have two functions. The first is to lull in their sleep the poor souls interred here below us; we sing to them softly, as a mother to children awaking, and hush them to sleep again quickly, lest they think of the friends they have loved and have left. That is why our soft notes are so veiled and so tender... Hist! some one sighed . . . in that alley to left . . . 't is the child in the corner, awaking. Quick! friends, now a song; let us sing her that song of the Flower of Death, for she loved it so much. (*They sing.*)

Half dreaming, and half playing,
  Under the willows and cypress trees,
A shivering child alone is straying
  In the rude chill of the autumn breeze;
Two wayside flowers are in her hair,
And her little legs are mostly bare.

Winter and summer, all the same,
  A little black frock she wears;
It scarcely covers her slender frame,
  Here and there are rents and tears,
Yet like a fawn the child is seen
Sporting on graves when the grass is green.

Enough; she sleeps.

NIGHTINGALE.

But this is sweet work you are doing.

THE NIGHTINGALES.

Oh! this is not all. We are guardians of the place, the beneficent sylphs of the region. These are times when people die and are buried with such simplicity that death loses daily that beauty of pomp, so chilling, mysterious, awful to men. Grave-yards are now at the gates of a town, like suburban villas, bourgeois of aspect and carefully raked. Mankind is growing bolder and bolder in presence of holy things now made familiar; and hideous profanation treads with miry feet and smears its dirty fingers over tombs. We are here to correct all that, and to drive away the sacrilegious interlopers who disturb the sleep of our dear departed. Our songs are lugubrious, our voices sad; thus do we render visits to the cemetery detestable to those who come to merely walk about, to enjoy themselves and breathe the rural atmosphere.

NIGHTINGALE.

Nightingales, my brothers, birds divine, for you I feel the deepest veneration; you disgust me with my useless and bohemian existence. Happy should I be to cast into the golden treasury of charity these pearls of my throat, squandered until to-day and scattered to the winds.

THE NIGHTINGALES.

Then live with us, Songster of the woods; come! make your novitiate of a single day, and you shall train your voice to mournful song, your heart to tender pity, and your eye to vigilance. You shall live our life; and when you see how efficacious are our services, you shall enter — if then you feel the courage — the Brotherhood of the Nightingales of the Cemetery... And now, attention! your novitiate begins. Behold, the sun is rising, the breezes freshen, it is day! A cracking sound is heard within the graves; the dead are waking, as their custom is, at dawn. Now must we lull them back to sleep. Sing, brothers, sing! And thou, good friend, take care; no shrilly trill, no loud roulade; thy throat must be of velvet and of honey.

SCENE SECOND.

It is wholly day; the sunbeams gild the tombs; the NIGHTINGALES are perched upon the cypresses. Enter CHILDREN.

CHILDREN.

Oh! what a good idea! what a good idea! That Miquelon has always good ideas. Oh! the charming place to play truant out of school! Shade, grass, flowers, and no master! What joy! Why, we can laugh with all our hearts, and run with all our legs! The devil take geographies and blotters! Let 's turn our copy-books to hats and make us fool's-caps of our grammars! What shall we play at, — tops, or balls?

THE NIGTINGALES *begin to sing in low, sad voices.*

Children, hush your noisy cries;
Think of that poor man who lies
  Sleeping just below.
When the Luxembourg 's so near,
Why do you come romping here?
Cypress trees no fruits do bear
  As you surely know.

CHILDREN.

And yet — how is it? — one does n't feel inclined for fun. Those birds up there do sing so oddly. No one can understand their song; yet, for all that, it gives one creeps all down one's back — Come, shall we play at ball, or tops?

THE NIGHTINGALES.

Children, hush your noisy cries,
Think of that poor man who lies
  Sleeping just below.

CHILDREN.

What say you, children, shall we go play elsewhere, — in the Luxembourg, for instance? 't would be less sad than here. Ah ça! come, let us decide; what shall we play at, — tops, or balls?

THE NIGHTINGALES.

Children, do not run so hard;
This is Death's forlorn graveyard,
  Not a play-ground gay;
And when midnight comes, alas!
All the dead men rise, and pass,
One by one, across the grass,
  While the death-pipes play.

CHILDREN.

Come away! come away! 't will do us harm to run about this place. Graveyards are meant for tears, and not for laughter. Besides, these gloomy trees, these little houses with barred windows, those nightingales that sing up there — so sad! so sad! Come, let us go! (*Exeunt.*)

NIGHTINGALE.

Nightingales, my brothers, why, this is marvellous; delighted am I by the ease with which your voices — But who may be that aged hag, wrinkled and dirty, who comes this way, a tourniquet beneath her arm? I have seen that face elsewhere.

LA MARCHANDE.

Where are my lambs? I saw a dozen come in just now, and so I hoped... Where the devil have they gone? Playing in some corner doubtless. If I give my cry but once or twice, hunger will bring the wolves from the woods. (*Cries.*) V'là le plaisir, mesdames, v'là le plaisir!

NIGHTINGALE, *indignantly.*

Ah! irreverent old witch! How dare you give that cry in a graveyard! Are you not ashamed?

THE NIGHTINGALES.

Be not so angry, bird of the woods; leave *us* to put an end to the profanation; our songs suffice. (*They sing.*)

A man in black before,
An infant's coffin bore
  Upon his arm.
A man behind, in white,
Sang in the fading light
  A funeral psalm.

MARCHANDE.

V'là le plaisir, mesdames, v'là le plaisir!

THE NIGHTINGALES, *singing.*

The mother, still a child,
Crieth in accents wild
  Of agony
That rend your very heart:
"My baby! must we part?
  My baby; oh! my baby."

MARCHANDE.

Be silent, cursèd beasts — begone, Satanic birds, whose song brings memories back! . . I think of my poor Eugénie . . . buried one year ago. . . I see the hearse, the bearers, the nuns all robed in white, the open grave, the priests, the acolytes . . . my flesh is creeping and my eyes are moist. . . I must leave this place; those nightingales have done me harm. (*Exit.*)

THE NIGHTINGALES.

You see, she goes; our songs have waked the fibre of a memory; judge of their power! But now be silent; here comes a turbulent group of citizens, promenading, shouting, and gesticulating

without respect for sanctity of place. Prepare to hunt such vermin from this spot.

CITIZEN, *reading an epitaph.*

" Louis-Charles-Borromée-Anselme Piquedoux, called the father of working-men, assistant-mayor of the IVth arrondissement, deceased in Paris, June 39, aged. . ." Pretty tomb that, i' faith! a pretty tomb! style, much style. Upon my honour, it is jolly.

CITIZEN'S WIFE.

Nastase, what do they mean, those big letters that come after " deceased, aged "? There 's an X and an L and a V.

CITIZEN.

Those, my beauty, are Roman numerals. They signify . . . wait a bit . . . hum! hum! . . One hundred, two hundred . . . yes, that's it; deceased aged two hundred and five years.

CITIZEN'S WIFE.

Two hundred and five years, Piquedoux? Why, you and he were born the same year.

CITIZEN.

Hang it! there are the letters. But, may be, numerical values were not the same in antiquity. . .

THE NIGHTINGALES.

Come, friends, let us silence these fat geese who come to sport fine waistcoats in a graveyard as if in the Pré-Saint-Gervais or the Pré-Catalan.

(*They sing.*)

Beneath lush grass and moistened earth,
  Forgotten dead are sleeping;
The dew their holy water, and
  The birds their memory keeping.

THE CITIZEN'S WIFE.

Well, are you coming, Nastase? What are you doing there, planted on your two legs, your mouth wide open? What's the matter with you? Why! you are pale.

CITIZEN.

I am thinking of the dead.

WIFE.

What next, I'd like to know!

THE NIGHTINGALES *begin again.*

But sometimes in the old grave-yard
  Where cypress sheds a rank perfume,
The earth upheaves, the graves unclose,
  The dead play truant to the tomb.

THE WIFE, *in a quavering voice.*

Nastase, come away from here. I don't know why, but I am all upset. My stomach turns. I'm frightened, frightened! Let us go. (*Exeunt.*)

THE NIGHTINGALES.

That 's three! . . Work does not lack to-day.

NIGHTINGALE.

Ha! ha! I see down there, behind that weeping willow, a pretty pair of lovers whom I know; I often meet them in the Ville d'Avray woods. Poor children! some sorrow must have brought them to the cemetery. Let us go nearer to them.

THE LOVERS.

Oh, adorable path! what sweet emotions does it give us! 'T is good in love to sound the chord of sadness; 't is not an ill to lead, at times, through melancholy paths our tender passion.

NIGHTINGALE.

Ah! the rogues! 't is only a refinement on their love that brings them here!

THE LOVERS, *pausing before a grave.*

See, what lovely flowers; suppose we gather some. . . Oh! the sweet roses! . . No one sees us. . .

NIGHTINGALE.

O! fie! fie! But that is wrong — to rob the dead!

THE NIGHTINGALES.

Babbler, hush! and let us act. (*They sing.*)

At times from the frigid place
  Where Death holds a victim bound,
The rigid form or the livid face
  Of a corpse rises out of the ground.

With a woe that he cannot utter,
He feels, in the dark of the grave,
Invisible fingers tearing
The heart that he cannot save.

Passer! oh, thoughtless passer!
'T is you who have caused this grief;
When you rob the dead of their roses
It is more than the theft of a leaf.

THE LOVERS.

Surely we did an evil action when we stole those flowers... Can those be drops of blood upon their stems? Oh, the poor dead!.. These flowers, exhaling memories, were so good for them!.. Come away quickly, lest they call vengeance down upon us. (*Exeunt.*)

THE NIGHTINGALES.

You see with how little effort we can bring men to reason.

NIGHTINGALE.

I am amazed. (*Sound of voices and songs in the distance.*) Ah! good heavens! what is that?.. Who are those hideous men in muddy boots and short, black mantles?.. Why such angry cries and uproar? Look! look! they are squatting on the grass; I even think they mean to breakfast here. Eat in a graveyard!.. 't is revolting, faugh!

THE UNDERTAKERS.

Before we begin our little work there is nothing like a jolly glass; the bottle is the nerve of toil;

and then, what better escort is there of blue wine than a wedge of cheese, green onions, and rye bread. (*They eat and talk.*)

NIGHTINGALE.

What profanation! .. Ah ça! my brothers, don't you intend to stop so great a scandal?

THE NIGHTINGALES.

Alas! our voices can do nothing here. The greasy ears of rustics are as callous as their hearts; let us not try to move them. Nightingale of the woods, do as you see us do,— sit feet apart and lift your wings.

THE UNDERTAKERS.

Hey! something fell into my glass... And now upon the cheese! .. Those devilish birds! one would think they did it for amusement. Let us go farther on. (*They move elsewhere; the same thing happens.*) Decidedly, to guzzle at one's ease there's nothing like a stout oak table in the dark corner of a tavern. Let us go finish our repast in the wineshop, comrades. (*They go.*)

NIGHTINGALE, *enthusiastically.*

Nightingales of the cemetery, you are indeed adorable. I ask to be admitted to the brotherhood.

THE NIGHTINGALES.

Be it done as you desire. You see our life — all watchfulness and all devotion. Since it does not repel you, be one of us, O brother, be one of us!

THE NIGHTINGALE OF THE WOODS,
after preluding.

The mother sits by the baby's bed,
Watching over the golden head;
While he sleeps no rest she 'll take,
  But if she sees the dreaming eyes
Half unclose, and fears he 'll wake,
  All her sweetest lullabies
Then she sings, in murmuring tone,
Lays her fair head gently down
  On the pillow where he lies.

CHOIR OF NIGHTINGALES.

Birds! for fear the dead should wake,
Sing a lullaby for their sake;
  Softly — lest the dead should wake!

THE END.

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